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## The Princess of the Walled House<sup>\*</sup>

THE MYSTERY OF THE FAIR DONNA MARIA AND HER FATHER,  
THE SKIPPER

By Donald McGibeny

IF I had gone to the war, my family might have sooner realized that I was no longer a small boy, and might have given me some say in my own affairs. Oh, I tried to go! I was on the scales before an army sergeant, trying to convince him that I had the requisite height and poundage to make a good soldier, when father rushed in, hot and breathless, from the college, to tell them my true age and to refuse his consent to my enlistment. The sergeant had no choice but to turn me down, although his eyes twinkled sympathetically when I announced my intention of running away and joining.

Father took me into his office, when we got back to the college, and talked to me very seriously. He said that lying never paid, and instanced the fact that he had

known at once what I was doing. He claimed that it was intuition, although I knew well enough that it was Miss Guernsey, the Latin teacher, who saw me entering the recruiting office.

He told me, furthermore, that I showed an utter disregard for my mother, who is an invalid; that I was an only son, and if anything happened to me the blow might be fatal to her—all of which made me feel ashamed and miserable, although I was only trying to do my duty as I saw it.

That is what comes of being the son of the president of a girls' school. Father's conduct is so faultless that a great many things I do seem small and unworthy. In this case, instead of going to the war—thereby gaining some measure of respect from my family—I was sent back to prep

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school. I speak of it now because, had they respected my judgment in any way, Donna Maria and I could have been quietly married without having the entire scandal of Pest House dug up and bruited about. But perhaps I'd better start from the first.

Pest House is the big house on the hill, surrounded by a high wall—the one with the ship's mast in the front yard. The name was given to it by the village people, because there has been so much mystery and misery there.

Just after my sixth birthday, the skipper and his family moved in. The house was a tremendously big one, with a lot of gables and gimcracks on it, built by some crazy old man before I was born. It had been empty ever since his death, because no one in the village was rich enough to buy it; although the trustees had talked of adding it to the school buildings. As it was a quarter of a mile from the campus, the matter was dropped, and I understand it was advertised for sale in New York.

One day a man from New York looked over the house, and the next week all the workmen in the county were hired to clean and repair it and to build the twelve-foot wall. That, in itself, would have been enough to damn the new owner in the eyes of the village, because the village likes to see how everybody else lives.

"When I see the goin's on o' some people," old Mrs. Moorehead says, "it reconciles me summut to my own wickedness."

I've heard father say that the village knew more about the girls in the school and their escapades than he ever would.

The wall didn't cause half the comment, however, that the mast did. Every one thought it was a flagpole until they put on the crosspieces and built a crow's nest thirty feet up, with a ladder leading to it. The first day after the new family moved in, a short, heavy-set, bearded sailor sat up there all day, watching up and down the road with a pair of marine glasses, and ringing the hours on a ship's bell. He did the same thing the next day and the next, and every day after that, rain or shine.

A committee from the village called on father and asked him to investigate. That was before I broke father's fine barometer and was banished from his office, so I was in the room when the committee came. I don't remember what they said, of course, but I remember how angry old Mr. Fos-

dick was. He's the worst busybody in town, and it made him perfectly furious to have something going on in the village that he didn't know all about.

Of course, I knew later why the skipper didn't want to have anything to do with the village, but that was when I had been inside Pest House and seen Donna Maria's mother.

The village tried in every way to learn what went on inside that high wall, but without success. Groceries were taken in at the gate by a swarthy little Italian woman or a giant negro, who seemed to make up the rest of the household. The village tried to get Mr. Schearer, the grocer, to stop delivering groceries unless the inmates of Pest House opened their gates to the public, hinting that they weren't respectable people, but Mr. Schearer said:

"Respectable or not respectable, they pay their bills regular every week, which is a lot more than some *ree-fined* people do; and if they want to buy my whole store, they can have it!"

Father tried to call, but was told by the big negro that no one was at home, which his famed intuition must have told him was not true. Harry Struthers, the undertaker's son, tried to climb the wall one evening; but when he got to the top he found the negro waiting for him with a club on the other side, so he didn't go farther. I merely want to show you how the place weighed on the mind of the village, and why they called it Pest House.

Father sent me to Selfridge Academy when I was ten, saying that a girls' school was no place for a growing boy. He was rightier than he knew. The young ladies of our school, being anywhere from sixteen to twenty years of age, always considered me a child, and allowed me to be the only male guest at their fancy dress parties, little knowing how observant a boy of nine can be.

In the excitement and homesickness of my first year at school, I forgot Pest House and its mysterious occupants.

## II

I HAD returned to the village for my summer vacation, and had started out, one warm June afternoon, in search of butterflies and insects—my bent, at the time, being toward starting various collections. I walked up the hill toward Peter's Woods, which lay just on the other side of Pest



House, but I stopped as I came in sight of the mud and its lone occupant.

He was perched in the crow's nest, imperturbably smoking a black cutty pipe and following the print of a newspaper with a stubby forefinger. He glanced up at my approach, took out his watch, and rang four times on the big, polished bell beside him. Then he picked up the marine glasses and looked long at a buggy, which was a mere speck, far down the road.

In the stubby, bearded, weather-beaten man I saw worlds of adventure. Gulping down my awe, I walked close to the wall.

"What you looking at?"

He took down his glasses and looked at me without interest. Then he seated himself and resumed his perusal of the paper. Piqued at his unfriendliness, I again started up the road, when he called after me, motioning me to come back.

"You're f'm the village, ain't ye?"

I nodded.

"Know ev'ybody there?"

"Pretty near everybody."

"Did ye see anything, now, of a smallish, red-faced man with a scar acrost his cheek and a limp?" he asked in an asthmatic growl.

"Do you mean Mr. Tuttle, the shoemaker? He limps."

"How long's he been there?"

"Ever since I can remember."

"He ain't the one. If ye see a smallish man—no hair—limps, and got a scar acrost his cheek, right here—you come a kitin' and tell me. Mind?"

I nodded. After staring solemnly at me for a moment, the weather-beaten sailor resumed his reading.

I was consumed with my own importance until I reached the woods. Then the red-faced man with the limp began to prey on my mind. I half expected to see him come out from behind a tree or arise from the bushes.

I didn't catch any butterflies that afternoon, but I was badly stung by a bee, who resented my efforts to add him to my entomological collection. It was in trying to find some mud to take the pain out of the sting that I wandered out of the woods and chanced to find the hole in the wall around Pest House.

It was a screened causeway for the escape of a small spring which bubbled up inside the grounds. I noticed it in crouching down to spread mud on my aching

hand, and I pressed my face to the screen to see what lay on the other side.

Inside the wall, at this point, there was a little natural glen or hollow, inclosed by shrubbery, in which the shadows lay thick. The spring rose in the center, with soft sand on all sides. The overflow from the spring spilled into a small excavation, forming a pool, and that in turn overflowed into the causeway where I crouched.

As I watched, the leaves were parted, and the little old Italian woman came into the glen and spread a thick, furry rug on the sand by the pool. In her arms she carried towels and a scarlet robe of some kind. She called after her in staccato Italian, and I dodged back, fearing discovery.

When I next looked, she had been joined by a child of about eight—the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Fluffy, bronze curls played around the child's face as she danced lightly about a small puppy yapping at her heels. Suddenly she stopped with flashing arms, picked up the dog, and threw it into the spring.

The Italian woman, with a cry, dropped the clothes she was carrying and fished the struggling puppy out of the cold water, while the child laughed gleefully. Something the woman said must have angered the little vixen, for she stopped laughing, stamped her feet, and broke into a perfect torrent of foreign words. When the nurse answered back, she suddenly put her two hands in the woman's hair, tugging and screaming with all her might.

Feeling a little weak at this exhibition of temper, I sank back, thrilled and excited at my new discovery. I heard the Italian woman run away crying, and I thought the child had gone with her; but when I next looked, she was seated on the thick rug, humming to herself and removing her shoes and socks. I dodged back against the wall, afraid to look, yet desiring to do so. Nothing could have pulled me away from the screen, yet all I could do was sit still and try to control my breathing.

Finally, with infinite caution, but with arms shaking in spite of all I could do to control them, I put my face to the screen. The child was knee deep in the pool and quite naked, her slender, boyish body glistening white where one shaft of sunlight came through the trees.

I dodged back again, but not before she had seen me. I scrambled from the ditch,

and would have run away, when I heard her calling:

"You! You! Come back here—you!"

As I hesitated and turned, I saw her face at the grating.

"Come here!"

I stood transfixed.

"Come in here with me!"

"I—I c-can't," I stammered, trying to control my excitement.

"Can't you come through here?"

She started tugging at the screening with both hands, while I stood by and watched her efforts.

"Can't you help me, you damn boy?" she panted.

Although suffocated with uneasy embarrassment and shocked at her language, I approached, and almost tore my hands off pulling at the wire mesh. The work eased my discomfiture and helped down the sickish, excited feeling I still felt inside me.

When at length I had torn away half the screen, I stopped for a moment, exhausted. She sat on the other side, looking at me with wide, inquisitive blue eyes. Neither of us spoke a word, although all trace of embarrassment had passed.

Suddenly she rose and ran over to the pool, calling back to me:

"Don't you want to?"

I hesitated for a fraction of a second, then stuck my head into the opening and scrambled through. The screen tore my blouse down the back, and my clothes were soaked by the water in the causeway.

"Don't you want to come in here?" she called from the pool, kneeling in the water and splashing it about her.

"I'll wade," I volunteered, pulling off my shoes and stockings.

"What's that?" she asked, scampering out of the pool and letting the water from her fingers drip down my neck.

"Why, when you wade, you just walk around in the water."

"But that's all I'm doing. The water is too cold to stay in it long."

"You only take off your shoes and stockings when you wade," I explained.

"How silly!"

I pulled up my breeches and started into the water, the wet sand feeling delightful to my parched feet. She ran after me, splashing me with her hands.

"Don't!" I said, walking away from her.

Laughing at my discomfiture, she threw

more water on me. I started toward her, to make her stop. She waited until I drew quite close, then dodged away. As I turned to catch her, I lost my balance and fell, and in a trice she was on me, holding my head under the water. I swallowed gallons, and came up sputtering and angry, while she danced on the bank and clapped her hands.

As I stood there, coughing up water and wiping my smarting eyes, a tall, silver-haired, gray-bearded man suddenly emerged from the bushes. He was dressed in flannel trousers, with his shirt open at the throat. In three steps he was on me, cuffing me and shaking me until my teeth chattered.

"Where the devil did you come from, you little scalawag?"

Donna Maria, my playmate, came running into the water to my assistance.

"You let him go! Let him go!"

She started crying piteously, and beat a tattoo on her father's back with clenched fists. He took hold of her with one hand and dragged us both from the water. Then he whisked the red robe around his daughter and set us both down on the carpet.

I had been too much frightened to make a sound, but now I added my wails to the crying of Donna Maria. The big man regarded the two of us for a moment, and then burst into laughter.

"Where did you find him, my little moonflower?"

"He came," Donna Maria wept. "To the little hole in the wall he came."

"And you invited him in, even though you were hardly dressed to receive callers! Quite right, my lotus blossom." He swept her into his strong, hairy arms and kissed her wet eyelids. "Despise the conventions as your father has done. What, after all, is a matter of a few clothes?"

He put her down and turned to me.

"And you, you young rascal—are you prepared to stand responsible for the embarrassing position in which I have found you? Do I understand that you are ready to marry the lady whom you've so gravely compromised?"

"Yes—yes, sir," I stammered, not understanding a word.

"Spoken nobly, but without conviction! I shall take your suit under consideration. In the meantime, this scandalous incident shall remain our secret. Beware of a wagging tongue, my *Romeo*, and all may yet

be well. Now run along home before I spank you both!"

He lifted me to my feet and watched me struggle through the screened causeway. When I had got to the other side, I heard Donna Maria call:

"Come back again soon, you!"

"I will, if I can," I shouted back, peering through the screen at the two—the small girl with her bronze curls and flaming robe and her tall, handsome, gray-bearded father.

Oh, the skipper was a fine man!

### III

THAT was the first time I ever told my father a falsehood. With torn shirt and wet breeches, I was haled into the office to explain, and lied bravely and without any compunction.

It was later, when I had been sent supperless to bed, that I stared through the window at the gathering twilight and wondered if it were worth while to go to eternal punishment for the sake of a woman. The lies I had told had undoubtedly started me toward perdition. My only chance for salvation lay in an eleventh-hour confession, and that would mean no more visits to Pest House.

There was the rub—I wanted to go back. To obtain forgiveness you had to be sorry for your sins, and there was no real repentance in me. Realizing vaguely that through some queer quirk of fate my father had begotten a potential criminal, I climbed into bed and went to sleep.

The next morning, at breakfast, Nemesis stalked into the dining room in the person of Maggie, the hired girl.

"The gentleman who owns the big house wit' the wall is downstairs an' a wantin' to see yez," she said to father.

It electrified the whole table, but no one more than me. I was sure the skipper had come to tell everything. Father hesitated for a moment, fearing what the village would say were he to be friendly to our undesirable neighbors. Inquisitiveness was too strong, however, and he went down at last.

For an agonizing ten minutes I waited for him to come back, my breakfast untouched before me. Ann, my sister, saw that there was something wrong, and maliciously prepared to enjoy it to the full.

"What's the matter with you, Robert?" she asked.

"There isn't noth—there isn't anything the matter with me," I answered, swallowing miserably.

"There is, too. Look at him, mother! He's done something he shouldn't have."

"Eat your breakfast, dear!" mother said kindly.

I dabbled a piece of toast in my egg and waited for father's return. When he did come, he looked sternly at me through his glasses.

"What is it?" mother asked.

"He wants to know if Robert can come over to his house to play with his little girl. I told him it was a question I could not decide alone. He is waiting downstairs."

"Oh, please let me go!" I begged, bounding around to mother.

"Don't let him go, mother," Ann spoke up. "You know how he acts when he goes anywhere alone."

"Perhaps Ann had better go, if it's a little girl," mother said.

"I suggested that," father answered; "but he seems to prefer Robert, for some reason."

"Do you think it's the thing to do, John?" mother inquired, patting my cheek. "You know what they say."

"He seems to be a very decent sort," father replied, wiping his glasses. "I was quite agreeably surprised. D'Aberville, his name is. He explained that he would very much like to open his house to the village, but his wife is very ill."

"But we know nothing of them."

"I was going to suggest"—he cleared his throat—"that perhaps this would be a good way of getting to know them a little better."

Thus I was made the official reporter, for the family, of what took place at Pest House. Father took me over later that morning, but didn't stay long. The skipper was genial and friendly, but made it quite plain that it was his son, and not he, who was wanted.

After that I went over every day by myself, and such fun no boy ever had.

In the first place, there was the skipper, always laughing and joking, so that you could hardly tell when he was serious. He was so big and strong and handsome, it warmed you just to look at him. He was always glad to stop whatever he was doing, to help you if you had a hut to build or a rabbit to catch, or if you had cut your foot on a sharp rock.

I've seen father and other men try to play, but they were so conscious of it that it was no fun. The skipper seemed to like to play. He would go camping with us in the glen, and would carry along real food to cook over a fire. Then he would sit down, with Donna Maria and me on each side of him, and tell us marvelous stories of the sea—digging for treasure in South America, mutiny and shipwreck, savage cruelty and savage love—until you could almost believe that what he told us had really happened.

He had been everywhere and seen everything, but I liked his stories of treasure-hunting best. They seemed more real than the others.

Then there was Jim Barney, the sailor. He would carry us up the ladder to the crow's nest and let us ring the ship's bell and look through the glasses. With his glasses you could see the road clear down to Donnan's Mill as plain as day. If people were driving up it, you could study their faces just as well as if they were close to you, and they wouldn't know a thing about it.

Jim told us stories, too. A lot of his people were the same ones the skipper talked about, but he was always interrupting himself to look down the road whenever anything appeared on it. He had a pistol under his coat, but when I asked him to let me see it he got angry, and wouldn't let us come up with him for several days.

Ophilus, the giant negro, was the strongest man in the world. I've seen him take a horseshoe and bend it out almost straight, and he could break a rope as easily as you could break a string. He couldn't talk English plainly, but when Donna Maria talked Spanish to him, he just jabbered away.

Donna Maria told me that Ophilus was scary; so one day, when he was sitting alone carving out a little boat for us, and didn't know we were near, I sneaked up behind him and shouted:

"Boo!"

He jumped up with a scream, and turned on me with his eyes popping from his head. He jabbed at me four or five times with his knife before he recognized who I was. Donna Maria thought it was funny, and wanted me to do it again, but I was afraid of him after that. He looked so wild and savage when he stabbed at me.

Old Paola, the Italian woman, was the only one I didn't like—because she didn't like me. She was always cross to me whenever Donna Maria paid more attention to me than to her, and sometimes she would send me home for no reason at all. Donna Maria could slap her and pull her hair, and Paola would only cry and beg her to stop; but afterward Donna Maria always loved her and kissed her, to make up for having been hateful. Then Paola would hug and kiss Donna Maria, and chatter and smile at her until the way they carried on was enough to make you sick.

There was another person in Pest House—Donna Angelina, Donna Maria's mother. I only saw her twice—one afternoon, and again on that terrible day when so many things happened.

The fact that I hadn't seen Donna Maria's mother had been commented on at home. I had told them how much fun we had, and how we romped all over the place, even in the house; and father thought it was strange that if D'Aberville's wife was so ill, we should be permitted to make so much noise. If she wasn't seriously ill, he thought it strange that she should be so confined. "Perhaps it's another—" mother said, and stopped.

Father looked mysterious.

"Um-m—perhaps," he replied; "but if that is the case, Dr. Thorne will have to be consulted soon."

With all the talk, I became interested, and one afternoon I asked Donna Maria where her mother was. She had been laughing, but at the question she suddenly sobered. She plucked a blade of grass and rose, humming softly to herself.

"Haven't you any mother?" I asked.

She was strangely embarrassed, and started to walk away. I was interested, and followed her. She played many jokes on me, and I saw a chance to tease her.

"I'll bet you haven't got any mother! I'll bet you haven't got any mother!" I singsonged.

She faced me, her eyes blazing.

"I have, too—you—you! Don't you dare say anything of my mother!"

"Where is she?" I taunted. "If you've got one, where is she?"

She turned and ran quickly toward the house, but stopped before she reached the porch. It was the closest approach to a quarrel we had had, and I hurried after her to tell her that I was sorry.



"Go home, you nasty damn boy!" she cried as I came up.

"I didn't mean it, Donna Maria—really I didn't; only—only—usually mothers are—well, usually you see them, and I've never seen your mother. That was why I said it. If I'd seen your mother, of course, then I'd know; but I've never seen her. Is your mother sick or something?"

Donna Maria hesitated, brushing her curls back from her face.

"My mother is upstairs," she said at last.

I dug a hole in the sod with my heel, afraid that she might grow angry again if I said anything.

"My mother is upstairs in the room of flowers. She is very, very beautiful, but—"

"She'd have to be pretty if she was your mother," I said shyly.

Donna Maria smiled at me suddenly, her eyes sparkling.

"Would you like to see my mother?"

Before I could answer, she grabbed my hand and dragged me with her inside the house. The place was a museum. Thick rugs from Bokhara and Tabriz covered the floor; tiger skins from Africa and India; bear skins from the arctic. The furniture was a motley of valuable curios, which seemed to have been spilled at random about the room. Chinese inlay of the Ming dynasty rubbed arms with delicate Louis XIV boudoir pieces. A heavy chest of solid mahogany stood next to a jeweled incense burner from Arabia. On the walls were chronometers and charts, knives and bolos, spears and war clubs, human skulls and mounted heads—the flotsam and jetsam of a hundred voyages and a thousand adventures.

Donna Maria pulled my head close to hers as we reached the foot of the stairs.

"You must not make the littlest of noise," she whispered.

From her excitement, I guessed that we were not supposed to do what we were doing.

"Where's your father, Donna Maria?" I asked apprehensively.

"He is in the room farthest back—asleep. You must not make even the littlest of noise, or he will waken. Come with me!"

We tiptoed softly up the wide old stairs, stopping with bated breath every time a stair squeaked. Before we had reached the

top, a sickish, heavy scent of flowers hung in the air.

In contrast to the lower floor, the upper hall was almost bare. Here there were no knives and bolos on the walls, only two priceless tapestries. The long rug was nailed to the floor, to keep it from slipping, and a small gate, such as is used to restrain children, extended across the hall.

We unlocked the gate and crept through the dusk to a door at the end, behind which came the sound of weeping. Never have I felt so excited and so sad. The heavy scent of flowers, the gloomy hall, the soft sobbing behind the door, all combined to suggest death.

"She is sad to-day," Donna Maria whispered, listening.

Softly she opened the door and peeped in, gradually widening the crevice until I could glimpse a room as brilliant as a conservatory. Donna Maria stepped in, still holding to the door, while I followed her closely. Every flower of North and South America must have been in that room—orchids as big as pond lilies; great tulip-like affairs with a poisonous, sweet perfume; roses, lilies, hyacinths—a riot of color.

In the center of the room, beside a small pool, watching us with a queer, childlike smile, stood a woman in loose, flowing robes of white. Her dark bronze hair hung in two long braids, intertwined with flowers. At her throat was an emerald as large as a pigeon's egg. Any one could have seen that she was Donna Maria's mother, yet she seemed more of a child than Donna Maria.

She paid no attention to Donna Maria, but came over to me at once with outstretched hands. She raised my face with one hand, while with the other she brushed back my hair.

"A boy child!" she said softly. "A boy child!" A pucker came between her eyes. "Mine? I can't remember; but—but you must be mine!" She patted me on the head, nodding and smiling. "Pretty boy!" she cooed. "Pretty boy!"

The look of perplexity came back into her eyes once more, and she suddenly fixed her attention on the door. For a moment she stood transfixed, a look of horror in her eyes. Then her lip trembled and she walked away, wringing her hands and crying piteously:

"They won't let me go! They won't let me go."

It was uncanny. I looked at Donna Maria for an explanation, but she only took my hand and led me from the room, softly closing the door behind her.

I had my first vague notion then why the skipper built the high wall and kept his affairs to himself; but poor, beautiful, mad Donna Angelina was only one of the secrets of Pest House.

## IV

MOTHER had sent me to the village for something—I don't remember now what it was. It was close to the time when I was to go back to school, and she was getting my winter clothes ready. Our house is a good half mile from the village, and as I had run all the way down the hill I stopped for a moment to get my breath on the stone bridge by Donnan's Mill, when I heard some one whistle almost underneath me.

I looked down under the bridge, and there, stretched out in the cool grass, lay a fat little red-faced man, who blinked up at me with a pair of beady, pig-like eyes. A dirty white scar ran from one ear to his mouth, twisting up one corner into a fanged smile. What heightened the effect was the absence of hair on his entire face and head—no eyelashes, no eyebrows, no hair at all. His face was pimply and dirty, as if he hadn't washed it for a long time, and a soiled red bandanna was knotted around his neck.

"'Ow far would ye say it were to the top o' the 'ill, young feller me lad?" he asked in squeaky falsetto, with a strong cockney accent.

"It's about half a mile to the top," I answered.

"On'y 'arf a mile?"

He took a black cutty pipe out of his pocket, and knocked out the ashes against his grimy palm.

"There's a plaice up there with a big fence abaht it—ain't there now?"

"You mean Pest House—it's got a wall around it."

His beady eyes twinkled.

"Pest 'Ouse!" He blew into the mouth-piece of the pipe until his face was an apoplectic purple, and again he knocked the refuse out into his palm. "Pest 'Ouse—good naime! Could yer tell me now, 'oo lives there?"

"Mr. D'Aberville."

"So 'e calls 'isself D'Aberville, does 'e?" He took out a square black plug of

tobacco, and began shaving slivers off of it into his palm with a knife. "I thought as 'ow 'e mebbe called 'isself Jones or Brown, or per'aps Peters!"

A sudden fear seized me. I gazed wide-eyed at the man below, remembering the first conversation I had ever had with Jim Barney. A red, pimply face—no hair, and a scar right there!

He squinted up at me.

"An' 'oo else lives up there, me laddy?"

"I—I'm sorry, but I've got to go," I said.

"Wot's your blinkin' 'urry?"

"I'm on an errand for my mother."

"All right, sonny! Tyke along 'ome then, an' 'thankee for the info'."

He lit his pipe and settled back into the grass. I walked slowly across the bridge, whistling loudly; then I tiptoed back and scurried into the weeds behind Donnan's Mill. It was probably only a few minutes, but it seemed hours before the little red-faced man finally moved, sat up, cocked a battered derby on the side of his head, and got to his feet.

I saw him take one limping step, and I was gone across the fields like a wild thing, keeping the mill between me and him until I could get safely back to the road. I ran up the hill until my lungs were raw and my legs like lead; but when I stopped to catch my breath, the sight of him, bobbing along far down the road, sent me off again at top speed.

Jim Barney was reading when I came running up outside the wall.

"Oh, Mr. Barney!" I called, trying to get my breath.

He put down his paper and leaned over the side of the crow's nest.

"Well, what's wanted?"

"He's—he's coming up the hill—the man with the limp!"

I don't know what I expected Jim to do. I rather imagined he would fire his pistol off; but he only trained his glasses on the road and walked toward the ladder. Then he changed his mind, looked down the road again, and calmly resumed his reading.

It was exasperating. I stood looking at him, trying to think of something more to say, when he looked down and said quietly:

"You'd better run along home."

I saw he meant it, so I started slowly homeward; but I saw that the man with the limp was close to the school gate, and that I would have to pass him if I went

down the road. I jumped across the ditch and crawled through the hedge, intending to go home the back way, but curiosity got the better of discretion. Realizing that I was hidden from Jim Barney, I dropped flat on my stomach and waited behind the hedge for the stranger to come up.

In a few moments I heard a faint shuffle down the road. I crawled to a small opening in the hedge to see better. The man with the limp stopped almost opposite my hiding place.

"Ship ahoy!" he called, cupping his hand to his mouth.

No answer.

"'Ello there, Jim Barney!"

"Hello yourself," the sailor answered laconically.

"Is that the brig Diamantina out o' Rio?"

"No, it ain't."

"Drop the ladder, maity, an' I'll come aboard."

"No, you won't."

"'Oo says I won't?"

No answer.

"Where's the skipper?"

"You can't see him."

"I can't see 'im, can't I? 'E ain't ter to be seen, ain't 'e? Well, 'e better see me, and that bloody quick! 'E can disguise 'isself with fancy naines—'e can call 'isself D'Aberville or Jaberville or Slaberville, but 'e ain't goin' ter give us the go-by again!"

He moved closer to the wall.

"See yer keep a civil tongue in yer 'ead, too, Jim Barney, or yer may waikie up some mornin' ter find yerself a blinkin' corpse. Where's the missus?"

"She ain't here."

"The 'ell she ain't! Where is she?"

"I tell you she ain't here," Jim Barney burst out angrily. "She died three year ago, thanks to you."

"You're a dirty, black-souled liar, Jim Barney! Hi suppose the skipper 'd 'ave 'isself a fine 'ouse with a stun wall abaht it, if she weren't with 'im! Two lovin' 'earts 'as been kept apart too long, an' stun walls ain't maide 'igh and thick enough ter keep me from 'er!"

His voice took on a wheedling tone.

"Come abaht, maity! You ain't so wuss, even if yer did saive yer neck by j'in-in' up with the skipper whlle we did our bit in a stinkin' quad. They's a 'andsome piece o' money if yer'll come with us."

"Who's with ye?" Jim asked.

"Ow, no, yer don't! That 'd be tellin'. Two now an' more later—when they gets out o' quad. Just drop the ladder over the side, like a good un, an' we'll 'ave a bit of a chat."

"We'll have our chat now, Baldy Dugan," Jim said slowly, "with you down there and me up here. Prison's the place fer you on earth an' hell's the place fer you afterward, an' if I can't send ye to one, I can sure send ye to t'other. Now I give ye fair warnin'—if ye don't leave skipper alone, I'll drill you full o' holes an' laugh while I'm a doin' it!"

The dirty stranger's voice was silky smooth as he replied:

"It's a blinkin' shaimie ye ain't marrit, Jim Barney, for yer widdy'd be keenin' over yer dirty carcass afore the week's gone. Is the naygur with yer?"

"Waitin' here to break your skull," Jim responded.

"That's two graves ter be dug, an' a third for the skipper. Ho, ho! Just tell skipper, if 'e should arsk abaht it, there's dirty weather ahead fer 'im an' all 'ands. By-by, maity!"

He shuffled past the hedge and on down the road, while I could hear Jim cursing aloud up in the crow's nest. I waited for a few minutes, and then crawled out of my hiding place. For the first time since the skipper came to Pest House, the crow's nest was empty.

## V

BALDY DUGAN stayed on, living at Dempsey's alehouse in the village. What is worse, he began talking. He said that Donna Angelina was his wife, and that the skipper was keeping her from him. No one believed it at first, because Dugan looked so dirty and unkempt, and because he was nearly always drunk when he talked; but when the skipper made no move to shut him up or have him ousted from the village, people began to put more credence in the tale.

Later, when Dugan put on clean clothes, washed up, and went to church, Dr. Mills, the Methodist minister, preached a sermon on "Repentance" in his behalf. It raised quite a stir, because the village people were really worked up over the way they had been ignored by the skipper ever since he came. Finally, when Dugan produced a dirty government paper, written in Portu-

guese, purporting to show that he had married a woman in Pernambuco, fifteen years before; when he offered to take oath that the woman mentioned in the document was the woman then living with the skipper, the village sided openly with him, and appointed a committee to see that something should be done.

Father headed the committee, and I will say, in all fairness, that he tried to be moderate. After he had translated the Portuguese document, and had cross-questioned Baldy Dugan without shaking his story, he felt called upon to write D'Aberville a note, asking him either to make some public denial of the charge or to quit the neighborhood. The skipper did neither the one nor the other, but remained behind his four walls, apparently unperturbed by all the chatter.

Father had not officially denied me permission to visit Pest House, thinking it unnecessary. I had been sent home once, following the advent of Baldy Dugan, and, seeing me playing at home, father thought the skipper himself had banished me. The truth was that I hadn't seen Donna Maria for a week, although I had crawled through the causeway every day to look for her. I had seen the skipper and Jim Barney talking together in worried undertones, but the skipper had sent me home when I asked for Donna Maria.

One morning I crawled through the causeway and found the glen filled with people from the village. They were standing around, talking in hushed, serious tones. A larger group stood around the bushes behind the spring.

Trying to attract as little attention as possible, I slowly walked around to them—my heart in my mouth lest something had happened to the skipper. Three men were bending over something, and I went over to see what it was. One of the bystanders caught me by the arm and yanked me back, just as I looked, and ordered me to run home.

I ran as fast as my legs would carry me, for I had caught a glimpse of what they were bending over. It was Ophilus, the negro, with his face slashed and gashed horribly.

I ran toward the front of the house, but when I saw father coming out of Pest House, with another man, I scuttled back to the causeway and crawled through. All I could see, all I could think of, was that

grayish-black face crisscrossed with purple-red slashes, around which the flies droned and buzzed.

Father came in at noon and told mother all about it—omitting the terrible details, of course. He merely stated that D'Aberville's negro servant had been found hacked to pieces that morning, and that suspicion pointed to a sailor called Jim Barney, who had disappeared. I started to protest, but remembered that I wasn't supposed to know anything about it, so kept quiet.

Father added that D'Aberville had accused Baldy Dugan of being responsible, and had wanted the sheriff to arrest him, but Dugan had proved that he was at Dempsey's alehouse all the night before. No one had taken any stock in D'Aberville's accusation, anyway, because every one knew what prompted him to make it. Father hinted that those in glass houses should be very careful about stone-throwing, and his eyes blazed angrily as he told how D'Aberville had ordered everybody off the place when he caught old Mr. Fosdick nosing around the second floor of Pest House.

"Perhaps Fosdick was wrong in going where he was not invited," father said, speaking through his nose, as he does when he is sarcastic; "but it speaks pret-ty strongly for this man Dugan's accusation, if D'Aberville has so much to hide. I thank God that the public could go through my home, from cellar to attic, without finding anything of which I need feel ashamed!"

"Did they get Mr. Barney?" I asked timidly.

"Not yet," father answered, and my heart leaped, for I did want Jim Barney to get away. "They'll have him in custody before evening. Sheriff Magee is bending every effort to find him."

When I heard that Joe Magee was trying to catch Jim, I knew he was safe. The only people Joe Magee ever caught were kids in swimming, and Lem Boles, the town drunkard.

I left the table and wandered out into the campus, feeling sorry for the skipper. I wanted to go right to him and tell him, no matter what people said, that I thought he was the finest man in the world.

It was a breathless, muggy afternoon, with the heat shimmering in oily waves over the fields. Lying underneath a tree, I watched the white cloud banks hanging



motionless in the sky, and listened to the lazy droning of the locusts, like little saw-mills in the trees. They made me feel lonely enough, but when a wood pigeon, near by, started its sad *coo, coo, coo*, like the sobbing of Donna Angelina, I just couldn't stand it any longer. I ran between the buildings and across the athletic field to the hedge that skirted the hot, dusty road. Keeping behind it, I walked slowly up to Pest House.

"Two graves to be dug, and a third for the skipper."

The sight of the empty crow's nest recalled Baldy's prophecy. As I approached the big wooden gate, the skipper himself came out, locking the gate after him. He was dressed in corduroy riding breeches and leggings, and carried a heavy black-thorn club.

"Skipper! Skipper!" I called to him, running forward.

He looked around quickly, and for a moment I thought I had made a mistake, he looked so changed. His face was careworn and his eyes were bloodshot, as if he had been drinking. When he recognized me, he lifted the corners of his mouth in a rather tired smile.

"Hello, young *Lochinvar*! Come to play with Donna Maria?"

"If—if I might," I answered.

He unlocked the gate.

"You'll find her in the house, wasting away for her lost love. Make her laugh, my young minstrel!"

He waited for me to pass through the gate, but I hesitated.

"Jim Barney didn't kill Ophilus, as they say he did—did he, skipper?"

"Of course not. You run along to our little sweetheart!"

"But they're going to kill you, skipper. Baldy Dugan told Jim so—I heard him."

He smiled at me, but his eyes were thoughtful.

"You'd better leave Baldy to me, too. He was just joking."

"He didn't sound like joking when he said it—and they've killed Ophilus."

He spanked me lightly with his hand.

"Whisht! Mind what I tell you. Run along to Donna Maria, and guard her while I'm gone!"

I tried to smile at him, but I couldn't. I was a little scared at being left all alone, even though it was broad daylight. I didn't know but what that horrible thing

with the flies on it was still in the glen, and might crawl out from the bushes and come up to the house.

I was even glad to see old Paola, although she was crosser than ever, because Donna Maria ran to me and kissed me as I came into the house. I hated it when the girls in father's school kissed me, they were always so mussy and wet; but this was different. Donna Maria pressed her lips to mine hard, and hugged me around the neck until she nearly choked me.

"*Que hay?* I am glad you are come back," she said over and over again, mixing it with a lot of Spanish. "See, Paola, boy has come back!"

She danced around me, but Paola only muttered something to herself and went back to her sewing. Donna Maria had been learning to sew, too, and Paola tried to make her go on, but she wouldn't.

There was a sudden noise upstairs, and Paola dropped her sewing and ran from the room.

"Where have you been, you?" Donna Maria asked.

She started to put her arms around me again, but I shrank away.

"I've come every day, Donna Maria, but I couldn't find you."

"They would not let me go from the house," she explained; "but now we will play. Quick—before Paola comes!"

She grabbed my hand and pulled me out through the front door.

"You cannot catch me!" she called, running around the house.

I raced after her, but when I saw she was going toward the glen I stopped.

"Don't go down there!" I called.

She danced on, unheeding, until she saw I was not following.

"Don't you want to?" she called back to me.

"Come here!" I yelled frantically.

"Don't go down there!"

She walked back slowly.

"Why won't you play?"

"Ophilus is down there, all bloody and dead, with flies crawling on him."

"Did he hurt himself?"

"He's dead."

"What is that?"

Never was there such a girl. Why, she didn't know anything!

While I was trying to explain what a person was like when he was dead, we heard Paola calling. We ran down to the

clump of bushes at the other end of the park, to hide. The sun had gone behind a big cloud, and it was fine and dark in there. We lay flat and listened to Paola calling us—keeping very still when she came in our direction.

After she had gone, I explained a lot of things to Donna Maria—about where people went when they died, and getting married, and other things she didn't know anything about. It began getting dark, and a gust of wind whisked in and started all the leaves to shivering. There was a quick flash of lightning, and Donna Maria began to get scared, so we ran for the house.

I was afraid of old Paola, so we hid in the library, behind the big divan, right by the French windows. We began to play keeping house; but it got so dark that Donna Maria crept close to me and put her arms around my neck. She began crying a little when it lightened and thundered, and asked me to sing to her as the skipper did. I couldn't sing, so I tried to tell her a story, but I would forget what I was saying every time the lightning flashed.

It got darker and darker, with the thunder getting louder and louder each time and catching up with the lightning flashes. I was watching the French windows, and wishing that the skipper would come, when I saw a man looking over the porch railing. I thought it was the skipper, and started to get up; but the next minute I shrank back against Donna Maria, paralyzed with fright. The man was Baldy Dugan.

## VI

BALDY came up on the porch and pressed his face against the glass, trying to see inside. Donna Maria saw him and started to call, but I clapped my hand over her mouth and pulled her down beside me. My heart was beating so loud and fast that I could hardly get my breath.

Baldy walked over to the railing and waved his hand to some one. Then he came back and opened the French windows noiselessly. The rain commenced to patter outside, and the wind blew the chintz curtains wide as he entered and shuffled across the room.

I held tightly to Donna Maria, and something of my terror communicated itself to her, for I could feel her body tremble. We lay there, sick with fear, until we heard the door close softly, and knew that Baldy had gone from the room. Then I

stood up, almost afraid to move, but more afraid to stay penned up behind the divan.

"Come on!" I whispered through chattering teeth. "Let's run!"

She put her hand trustingly in mine, and we started for the French windows, when there came another blinding flash of lightning, right in our faces, and a crash of thunder that shook the house. Donna Maria gave a little shriek and shrank back behind the divan, sobbing noisily.

"Hush!" I whispered. "Shut up! If he hears you, he'll kill us! Hush!"

She stifled her sobs and clung to me, while I stood there trembling, listening to the swish of the rain outdoors. Suddenly there came a medley of noises from overhead—a series of screams, a loud laugh from Baldy, and a torrent of shrill Italian from Paola. Then a door slammed and Paola ran downstairs, chattering and sobbing wildly.

"Paola! Paola!" Donna Maria cried, running for the hall.

I ran after her, but when we reached the door Paola was almost at the gate. As we stood there at the front door, drenched by the rain blowing in, I heard a step behind me, and whirled around to find Baldy Dugan halfway downstairs.

"Kids!" he laughed squeakily. "Snivelin' little barstids of 'is, Hi suppose!"

I would have run if I had been alone, but I couldn't with Donna Maria there. I put her behind me and faced him, trying not to cry. He lurched down the stairs and grabbed me by the arm, his red, beady eyes glowing evilly, although he still smiled that twisted, fanged smile. He had been drinking, and his rancid breath sickened me as he brought his face close to mine.

"Oho!" he laughed. "'Ere's a go! If it ain't the little tyke I seen at the bridge!"

"Please, sir," I cried, "we aren't doing anything."

"Course yer ain't. Ter think it was 'is own kid wot give me the info'! Ain't that a bloomin' go?"

He pulled me to one side and took hold of Donna Maria.

"Come out 'ere, me cuckoo. Let's 'ave a squint at yer!"

Donna Maria's lips trembled as he looked her over, but she didn't cry. She held her little body straight and glared back at him.

"The spittin' himage of me laidylove hupstairs," he said, almost in awe. "S'welp

me, hif I thought as 'ow yer'd grow hup ter be like 'er, I'd slit yer blinkin' gullet!"

"You leave her alone!" I cried, as he brought his red, calloused hand to her throat.

I hit out blindly, struggling to get free. He cuffed me about with sudden fury and threw me ten feet down the hall.

"Keep your trap shut, or I'll give yer wot's wot! Wot d' yer mean, talkin' to your betters that way? I'll learn yer some manners!"

He started toward me again viciously, but I struggled to my knees and scuttled into the library. Just as I got inside the door, I looked up and saw the skipper walk onto the side porch.

"Skipper!" I screamed frantically. "Skipper!"

I jumped up and ran into his arms as Baldy followed me into the library.

"So there yer are at larst!" Baldy snarled fiercely, as he saw D'Aberville. "Hi thought it was about time for yer to show up!"

He made a sudden move for his back pocket, but the skipper had a blue-barreled revolver leveled at him.

"Drop that!" the skipper ordered crisply.

Dugan held his position for a moment. Then he dropped his hands to his sides and straightened up.

"Hi can wait," he said slowly.

The skipper handed his thorn club to me and walked over to him.

"Dugan, you know it would give me the greatest pleasure in life to kill you, so don't move!"

He pulled a short-barreled revolver from Dugan's back pocket and tossed it to the farthest corner of the room. He felt over the man's clothes for other weapons. Then he stood back.

"I've been waiting for this minute for twelve years, Dugan. I knew you'd come. I could shoot you now, but it wouldn't half satisfy me. I'd curse myself for putting you where I couldn't get at you to kill you again. The sweet lady upstairs is mad because of your cruelty. Men are frying in hell because Baldy Dugan, the killer, hated them or feared them. But you've had your day, Baldy. You'll never kill another man or ruin another woman. You're going to do the only decent act of reparation that lies within your power. You're going to kill yourself!"

"Don't maikie me larf," Baldy squeaked, screwing up his red face into a horrible grimace.

Without a word, the skipper tossed his own revolver into the corner and pounced on the squat man in front of him. They went down in a heap, but with the skipper on top. Again and again I heard the sickening smack as he drove his fist into Dugan's face.

Dugan struggled and panted. Twice he reached for the skipper's face, to claw at his eyes. Once he got his hand into the skipper's hair, and almost tore the scalp loose, but D'Aberville smashed and smashed, until Baldy's squeals turned to moans; until those too died out, and the man's body ceased to writhe; until the face beneath him was nothing but a bloody mass. Then he arose, poked the fat body scornfully with his foot, and examined his own raw and bleeding knuckles.

He came over to me, his face rather white, and took the thorn club from me. I thought he was going to beat Dugan with it, but he walked over and hung it on the wall. He seemed to have forgotten that I was in the room. Then he turned to the inert bundle on the floor.

"Dugan, can you hear me?"

The bundle lay quite still. D'Aberville walked over to a carafe of water, brought it back, and spilled part of it on the man. Then he got down and shook him.

"Dugan, I'll not go on until you understand what you are doing. Can you hear me?"

He spilled some more water on the fellow. Dugan moaned and rolled over on his side. The skipper shook him fiercely by the shoulder. Never have I seen such malice in a man's expression.

"Wake up, damn you! Don't try to make me think you're dying. Wake up!"

Dugan moaned again and rolled over on his stomach, groping blindly and clawing at the rug, trying to get away. He was like a wounded mole being pestered by a dog. The skipper walked over to the corner, picked up Dugan's own revolver, came back, and knelt beside the prostrate man.

"Can you hear me, Dugan? Remember Stevenson, whom you killed on the Diamantina, and whose wife you stole and forced into a fake marriage at Pernambuco? I'm Stevenson speaking. Remember Moore, whom you let over the side for the sharks to play with, when you were in

command of the ship? I'm Moore speaking. Remember Olaf, the Swede, whom you stabbed to death? Remember the cabin boy you hanged because he saw the murder and threatened to tell? I'm Olaf and the cabin boy speaking. And only last night you butchered Ophilus, the negro. Well, I'm Ophilus speaking. We condemn you to die by your own hand—do you hear?"

He shook Dugan viciously, and laughed as the fellow tried weakly to get away. He put the revolver in Dugan's hand, twisting the fingers around the grip and holding them there. Then he slowly forced the gun toward Baldy's temple.

I couldn't look. Choking back a cry, I stumbled toward the French windows; but I stopped dead, for there, framed in the gray light, stood a thin, stoop-shouldered figure with a cap pulled down over his eyes. Before I could move or utter a word, the newcomer raised his arm and fired twice.

I must have fainted—at least, I remember nothing of the few minutes that followed. I felt nauseated and dizzy. The room spun about, and there was a drumming in my ears. Then everything went black.

When I awoke, some one was stroking my forehead and talking softly. At first I thought that I was at home, and that it was mother talking to me. As I vaguely took in my surroundings, I realized it couldn't be mother, but I still lay there gathering my thoughts.

"Pretty boy!" the voice cooed. "Pretty boy!"

With a chill gripping my heart, I raised my eyes and gazed into the smiling, child-like face of Donna Angelina.

"My boy! Pretty boy!"

I sat up dazedly, pulling away from her as she reached out her hand to touch me. Memory flooded back into my brain. With a sob of dread, I scrambled dizzily to my feet and gazed wildly about the darkening room.

Then my eyes focused on something by the table. With trembling limbs I walked closer. In an ever widening pool of blood lay the still figure of the skipper, shot through the head.

## VII

BALDY DUGAN could not be found. A gray-haired, crisp business man, named Anderson, came from New York to take

charge of affairs at Pest House. What relation he was to the skipper, if related at all, I didn't know. He offered a large reward for the finding of the murderers, but though reports came from Mexico and Canada, as well as from several cities in the United States, that Dugan had been found, they proved groundless.

For a short time the village enjoyed national notoriety. I use the word "enjoyed" deliberately. Reporters came from everywhere. I was made to tell my story again and again, until I was so consumed with boyish self-importance that father hustled me off to school a week early, to rid himself of me.

Eventually, however, the talk died out, Pest House was closed, and a funny misspelled letter from Donna Maria told me that she had been placed in a convent school in France. For a time we exchanged boy and girl confidences; then that too stopped.

The first time I came back home, I found that I missed her badly. I climbed the wall and wandered through the deserted grounds, wondering what she was doing, and if she would ever come back. The house was boarded up and empty. Burglars had tried to rob it, about two months after it was vacated; so all the furniture had been moved out.

I left the house with a sick, empty feeling, and wandered down to the spring. Boys had scuffed up the fine sand with mud and filth; the causeway was broken and the pool dried up.

Had I been older when the events I have related occurred, I might have been attracted back to the shaggy old place, year after year, by the memories it held for me; but youth only studies surfaces, and is too much engrossed in the future to look backward for long. With that decayed look which all houses assume when they have been empty for a year; with its porches weed grown, its paint peeled and blistered, its windows boarded up, Pest House held few attractions for me in its decay. In the activities of preparatory school, I practically forgot Donna Maria and the exciting mystery that shrouded her life.

One other thing before I go on. At the time when it happened it seemed without importance, but later on it was the deciding factor in ending the mystery of Donna Maria's parentage and in linking up the past with the present.



On the night when the skipper was murdered, I was almost certain that I saw Jim Barney pass the school. I was standing at the gate, watching the crowd going and coming from Pest House, when I noticed a man coming up the hill alone. His walk and build were so much like Jim's that when he was almost opposite me I called him by name.

The man only hurried on all the more rapidly, without answering or looking back. I noticed, then, that he was dressed in faded overalls and wore a battered straw hat, so I took it for granted that I was mistaken; but I reflected afterward that if it had not been Jim, he would surely have looked in my direction when I called to him.

One morning, just before I started away to college for my junior year, I came downstairs to see father. His school was just opening, and the hall outside his office was crowded with a noisy mob of laughing girls. All of them focused their attention on me, because I was the only male present, and because I appeared to be embarrassed by their scrutiny. I tried to look annoyed, although, as a matter of fact, they were the principal reason why I was choosing such an inauspicious moment to consult father.

Just before I reached the bottom step, I raised my eyes to look at the newcomers, and saw old Paola standing over in one corner, beside a girl who was sitting quietly by herself. Paola I would have recognized anywhere. The same gaudy shawl, or one exactly like it, was wrapped around her shoulders. The same half-moon earrings dangled from her ears, and she stood in exactly the position in which I had so often seen her, with her arms folded across her ample bosom. She was looking angry defiance at the twoscore chattering Americans around her.

The girl behind her I would never have known as Donna Maria. She still resembled her mother—yes, but with an effulgent beauty that defied comparison. She had dark blue eyes set in a heavy fringe of black lashes—timid eyes, a bit reproachful, as if they had seen much sadness; bronze hair, somehow alive; a clear skin with a touch of olive about it, but not enough to hide the color that mounted swiftly as she saw me looking at her.

I approached eagerly, braving the heavy scowl on Paola's face—a scowl which sof-

tened, but did not entirely disappear, as she recognized me.

"How do you do, Paola?" I greeted her. "Donna Maria, don't you recognize me—the boy you used to play with?"

Donna Maria had dropped her eyes at my approach, but she lifted them now with quick inquisitiveness.

"How do you do?" she said in a soft, shy voice, almost curtsying to me as she rose. The greeting had all the timidity and politeness of a convent-bred French girl. It bespoke foreign training.

"You are coming here to school?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Are you going to open up Pest—your old home?"

"I do not think so."

We were both uneasy and embarrassed by the presence of so many auditors, so I awkwardly shook hands and withdrew. When I looked back, she was sitting behind Paola in the corner—a lonely-looking figure in that animated crowd of confident, self-assertive American girls.

The same Mr. Anderson, who had closed Pest House after the murder, was closeted with father. As they seemed to be discussing something of importance, and to be more or less resentful of my intrusion, I begged pardon for interrupting and backed out.

At the dinner table, that night, I found out what the discussion was about. Mother, who had had a dangerous heart attack the year before, was feeling well enough to be moved, and father and I had brought her downstairs in her wheel chair. She was always interested in the opening of the school, and father was discussing his various problems. He had told her of Donna Maria's matriculation, and mother had questioned the wisdom of sending her back where her history was so well known.

"That isn't what worries me," father said. "I don't know what I'm going to do with the Italian woman she has with her. I explained to Anderson—he's her guardian—that it was breaking all school precedents, but he insisted on it. He had to, after the way the woman acted. I had almost persuaded him the girl would be happier without her, on account of the attitude the other girls would take. He called the old woman in to tell her about it, and—would you believe me?—she flew at me like a catamount. I think she would have

scratched my eyes out, if Anderson hadn't quieted her by telling her she could stay."

"Where will you put her?" mother asked.

"I've made tentative arrangements to move Miss Erickson out of her small room at the end of the hall, and to install both the girl and her nurse in there."

"The other girls won't like it."

"I know that, but it's the best I can do at present. Perhaps the girl will persuade the old woman to leave, after she becomes accustomed to her surroundings."

"To come back to that other matter, have you thought how the girls may act toward the D'Aberville child?"

They exchanged looks across the table.

"You mean, because of her father's death?"

"No—the other part of it," mother said quietly.

"What other part?" I asked.

"I didn't feel at liberty to take up that question with Anderson," father replied, disregarding my query. "I told him that it might be wiser to select a school for the girl in some other locality, but it seems the girl herself is determined to come here. Since that is the case, we will take her in and try to make things pleasant for her."

He studied his plate thoughtfully.

"After all, my dear, our duty lies in giving an education to any girl who is not morally or mentally deficient. It would have been senseless to object to her matriculation on the ground of her birth."

"What is wrong with Donna Maria's birth?" I demanded.

"Nothing, son," father said. "We were just talking."

"I'm afraid she isn't going to have a very pleasant time of it," mother sighed.

I didn't have a chance to talk to Donna Maria before I left, although I saw her several times. Each time Paola was with her and ostentatiously led her away from me. That wouldn't have stopped me, if there had been any sign of welcome about Donna Maria. It was the manner in which she either avoided my eyes entirely or gave me the briefest of nods that left me no choice but to pass on.

I was haunted by her beauty and by her soft, searching eyes, full of sadness. How she had changed from the boyish little firebrand I had known, and how different she was from the other girls in the school!

All through that autumn Donna Maria was in the back of my mind. I built a lot of illusive air castles about her, and promised myself that at Christmas time I would take advantage of our childhood acquaintance and break through her reserve; but when I came home for Christmas the girls had already gone away for their vacations, and I was compelled to go back to college before they returned.

If I didn't have a chance to see her, I heard enough about her. Mother's prophecy had come true. The girls in the school had practically ostracized her—all except one. Father ascribed it to Paola's presence and Donna Maria's own shyness. Mother said it was "the other thing," but what she meant I could not find out.

One thing almost brought matters to a climax. Donna Maria was so adept in Romance languages that father made her an assistant to the regular teacher, hoping in that way to break down the wall of ostracism that the other girls had built. Of course, it had exactly the opposite effect. The girls first complained of favoritism, and later, when Donna Maria was left in charge of a class, they staged a near riot.

I might never have had a chance to see the brutal snubbing that Donna Maria was undergoing had it not been for a hastily worded telegram calling me back from college in May. Mother had suffered another heart attack, and though the danger of a fatality was past by the time I arrived, I was kept around the school for a week, until all fear of a relapse was past.

I was passing the music room one afternoon when I heard some one playing. The touch of the player sounded more like a man than a girl, so I looked in at the door. Donna Maria was sitting at the piano with her back to me. Her whole attitude one of angry defiance, directly in keeping with the spirited chords she was playing.

I was enthralled at the picture she made, with the afternoon sun bathing piano and girl in a calcium of golden glory. When she had come to a sweeping, triumphant finish, I clapped my hands. At the sound, she jumped nervously to her feet and turned.

"That was bully, Donna Maria! I didn't know you could play."

"Please go away," she said unsmilingly.

Instead of obeying her, I came toward her at the piano.

*(To be continued in the June number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

# Dedication

A STORY OF THE GREAT NEW MEMORIAL OF ABRAHAM  
LINCOLN IN WASHINGTON

By Kenneth Duane Whipple

THE great Lincoln Memorial, in the city of Washington, rears its massive marble columns at the western end of the Mall, amid unsightly surroundings which are now being transformed into a setting of beauty; for the day of its formal dedication is at hand. But to this mighty monument there has already come a dedication, unique yet eminently fitting—a stranger dedication than any within the annals of shrine or cenotaph.

Gariel Lutch, in his right hand a heavy black traveling bag, swung down from the train in the Union Station at Washington, mingling unobtrusively with the outgoing throng of passengers. He was a short, thickset man, clean shaven, but with a heavy black beard pushing incessantly through his swarthy skin. Deep, intolerant lines marked his dark, saturnine face, lighted only by a pair of temperamental blue eyes and surmounted by a shock of wiry hair, prematurely gray. The blood of a dozen alien races mingled in his veins.

A redcap rushed forward with eager hand outstretched toward the black bag, but Gariel Lutch waved the man aside with a grim smile. It was no part of his plan to intrust this bag to the keeping of another. If the fat black porter had but known its contents, his smile might not have been so broad and engaging, nor his importunities so insistent.

Entering the vaulted waiting room, he glanced toward the big clock at the left. It lacked ten minutes of three o'clock. He nodded to himself with a pleased air. When the early spring twilight descended, he would strike. In the meantime he

would amuse himself by driving about this wonderful city—this capital of America.

The corners of his thick lips curled in a sardonic smile. A beautiful city—yes! But let them wait until to-morrow! They should see—these reckless, money-wasting lawmakers!

There had been a diner on the train from New York. Gariel Lutch had made a hearty meal, his appetite unaffected by any qualms of conscience or tremors of foreboding. Now, as he passed through the waiting room, he cast behind him no glances of mistrust. Rather, his thoughts were focused upon his mission in Washington—that self-appointed mission to which he had irrevocably dedicated himself.

He passed through the side exit and came to the taxicab stand. A car shot forward to the platform. Placing his bag carefully on the slippery cushion, he took his seat in the vehicle.

The driver, leaning back, spoke over his shoulder.

"What hotel, sir?"

Gariel Lutch frowned.

"Never mind a hotel now," he said, in a deep, guttural tone. "Just drive me around the city for an hour or so."

The driver nodded compliance. To him this was a common request. For a time, as they rode, he indicated different points of interest; but finding that his fare seemed indifferent, he desisted with a shrug of his square shoulders. Most of them expected it; if this one did not, so much the better.

Within the taxicab Gariel Lutch, his head sunk low on his breast, disinterestedly contemplated the various public buildings past which he rode—the Post Office, the

EDITORIAL NOTE—According to the latest available information as this magazine goes to press, the Lincoln Memorial is to be formally dedicated on May 30.

Capitol, the Pension Office, the Treasury, the White House. At least, however extravagant their cost, these structures housed some portion of the nation's business; they were not utterly useless.

But he had not considered these. His mission lay elsewhere.

He leaned forward and rapped on the glass.

"Drive me now to the Lincoln Memorial," he ordered.

Five minutes later the chauffeur, in obedience to a second command, halted his machine on the broad driveway before the most picturesque structure in the city of Washington. In the late afternoon sunlight its Doric columns of whitest marble, dazzlingly beautiful, gleamed with a purity almost unearthly against the green background of the Virginia hills in all their springtime beauty.

Sightseers dotted the broad, level steps leading up to the memorial. A warm April breeze blew from the south, ruffling the placid waters of the Potomac just beyond.

Gariel Lutch nodded his head slowly. He had chosen well. Of all the criminal extravagances of the stupid government at Washington, this was the most stupendous, the most unbearable. Taxpayers groaned beneath their onerous burden—for this! A gaudy, useless edifice, enshrining a mere statue! Millions of dollars expended for a marble cenotaph to perpetuate the memory of Lincoln!

Well, he would put an end to all this. He would strike the first blow to-night.

For years the idea had preyed upon his mind, becoming in the end a virtual obsession. He had followed the history of the Lincoln Memorial from its inception. Always it was appropriations—money for plans, for grounds, for material, for construction; so much for increased labor costs, so much for patching up the errors of the contractor—and still it was not ready to be dedicated.

The whole thing—the criminal extravagance of the government—was sickening. With a grimace, he spat through the open window of the taxicab.

For a time he had also considered the amphitheater at Arlington. As late as last summer, brooding amid his books and his tools there in his tiny workshop high above the narrow streets, he had marked on his little map, as an alternative, the marble structure on the Virginia hills; but since

the services for the Unknown Dead on Armistice Day, he no longer sought the destruction of the Arlington amphitheater. Among the many who did not return from France had been black-haired, laughing-eyed Savarien, only son of Gariel Lutch.

But this useless mass of marble—that was different. A bomb within the memorial would shatter once and for all this monument to extravagance and waste. There would be no loss of life—it was not his intent to maim and kill. It was the invisible menace of tyranny that he wished to shatter—the unseen tentacles of taxation, grinding the faces of the poor, filching from their pockets the hard-earned pence to be heaped in profuse prodigality before the shrine of ostentatious pride. America's history teemed with illustrious, empty names, perpetuated by such futile means. Hero worship! Bah!

His hand went out to the black leather bag on the seat beside him. He lifted it cautiously—this means for bringing about the long desired result. He looked at his watch. It was nearly four. He did not dare to remain—now.

"Driver, take me back uptown," he commanded.

## II

FIFTEEN minutes later Gariel Lutch, returning as a passenger in a second taxicab, descended in front of a row of houses northwest of the Lincoln Memorial. Standing on the curb, he dismissed the taxi and stood watching it out of sight. Then, carrying the heavy bag with an assumption of ease, he walked rapidly toward the monument and joined a crowd of late afternoon tourists from a "Seeing Washington" bus as they climbed the steps.

A wizened, white-haired guard, wearing in his left lapel the insignia of authority, stood at the top of the steps, warning in a cracked voice:

"No pictures! No pictures!"

At sight of a leveled camera he hobbled away, waving his feeble arms in protest. Gariel Lutch looked after him in grim amusement. No pictures, indeed! So this was the sort of watch they kept upon the mighty memorial!

Well, it would be even easier than he had thought. The dedication, so long delayed, would never take place. Those who, obeying the guard, waited until the formal opening of the memorial to take snapshots,



would have to wait until doomsday. After to-night—

He entered the dim interior, passing between the gleaming columns of marble, and paused involuntarily at sight of the huge, ungainly figure of stone confronting him—the gigantic statue of Lincoln in repose, looking out over the city with deep-sunken, brooding, kindly eyes, his gnarled hands lying awkwardly along the arms of his chair. Seated alone there in the huge, lofty-ceilinged chamber, the figure of the martyred President rose high above the chattering tourists straying aimlessly over the marble floor below.

Gariel Lutch looked back over the city, his gaze following the gaze of Lincoln. The nation's capital lay quiet and peaceful under the bright afternoon sun, its greenery of tree and park and shrub very beautiful on this clear spring day. Nearer at hand, across what would soon be the mirror pool, loomed the slender spire of the Washington Monument, almost concealing the more distant dome of the Capitol.

Gariel Lutch frowned as he looked at the lofty monument to the first President. Another useless memorial to a "great" American! However, this had not been built in his day. His taxes had not paid for it, thank God!

He realized that he had been standing conspicuously between the columns, and made haste to move to a darker corner. He had no desire to attract attention to himself. Cautiously he attached himself to a family party of voluble guidebook readers. At their heels he made the circuit of the hall, coming to a halt at the sight of the massive marble pedestal which supports the chair of Lincoln.

Gariel Lutch looked swiftly about. The noisy sightseers, heedless of all about them, he need not fear. Their group screened him from observation on two sides. At his back was the western wall of the memorial, at his left the base of the statue. He could have devised no better protection.

Three feet above his head the juncture of wall and chair formed a commodious niche, large enough for a man to lie hidden. The square-cut pedestal fitted tightly against the wall; but the massive chair stood out slightly from the side of the memorial. Here was his opportunity!

With his keen eyes Gariel Lutch measured the distance to the niche. Another swift glance about him, and he acted sud-

denly. His back to the wall, his shifting glance commanding the entire scene, he lifted the black bag above his head, balanced it momentarily in his right hand, and swung it vigorously backward in the direction in which instinct and memory told him the niche lay.

Sweat stood out on his swarthy forehead as the bag left his hand. In his imagination he experienced the soul-deadening concussion which might follow should the black bag slip and fall crashing to the marble floor.

There was no concussion; his brain had registered the distance exactly. The black bag slid smoothly into place. Standing on tiptoe, he pushed it out of sight. Now to get himself beside it!

His hairy fingers were already stiffening for the spring when of a sudden the screening group dissolved. Mamma, it seemed, just simply couldn't stand this spooky place any longer! Shrieks of laughter from Jessie and Julia, with a deeper guffaw from pa, greeted this information. Still giggling, the family party made for the entrance.

Gariel Lutch, left alone in the corner, stepped quietly to the end of the chamber and stood gazing with an expressionless face at the carved stone tablet there. He was not reading the "Gettysburg Address," despite the absorbing interest which he affected in the deathless words of the martyred Lincoln. From the corner of his eye he was watching for a repetition of the grouping which would enable him to attain the niche where he had placed his black bag.

It was a good half hour later before his second opportunity came. This time it was a party of midshipmen, with eyes only for a pair of dark-haired Virginia beauties, that screened him. It was literally the last moment. Already the dim interior of the memorial was growing yet more dim, and the high-pitched, querulous cry of "Closing! Closing!" was heard without, as the guard herded stragglers to the head of the steps.

Gariel Lutch felt a momentary qualm as, with tense fingers, he swung himself into concealment. His thoughts reassured him. If his bomb did its work well, no trace would be found. If it failed—if it shook but did not overthrow—his tracks were cunningly hidden. Even if he were traced, nothing could be proved, let them search his rooms ever so thoroughly. No person

knew of his coming; none would know of his going. Secure from every angle, he defied the entire Secret Service to bring him to justice.

Patting the black bag at his side, he settled himself to await the slow coming of darkness.

### III

DURING the long hours that followed, while the narrow patch of sky between the pillars turned from blue to rose, from rose to gray, from gray to black, Gariel Lutch lay quietly in the niche behind the chair of Lincoln.

Now and then he looked down upon the hobbling, rheumatic figure of the little old guard, peeping behind pillars and into corners to make sure the place was deserted before locking the low wooden gate—a futile protection—at the foot of the steps. The old man's conscientious behavior amused him. He did not know that the wizened guard had been a drummer boy in the Union army when Abraham Lincoln was President, and that to him the task was a labor of love.

At length, snapping the padlock, the little old man went slowly away. The memorial seemed absolutely deserted; but still Gariel Lutch did not act. A delay of another hour would not be amiss; he had no intention of being taken by surprise. The whole night lay before him. To thwart the coming dedication would be but the work of a few moments.

Stolidly he settled himself for the wait. The city was now agleam with twinkling lights. The softly illumined dome of the Capitol, half hidden, half revealed by the darker silhouette of the Washington Monument, gleamed through the dusk like a fairy mosque. All at once the lights outside flashed on, bathing the marble columns in a flood of radiance, casting gigantic shadows within the dim recesses of the majestic cenotaph.

Gradually a calm stole over the troubled spirit of Gariel Lutch. Some witchery of the mighty memorial, some spell of the brooding Lincoln, crept imperceptibly into his distorted brain. As he looked out over the city, the feeling came that in some manner the welfare of this community was his welfare, that the safety of its people was his safety. Moment by moment a great, unwonted compassion swelled within him.

"Like as a father pitieth his children—"

The phrase came unbidden to his mind. These were the homes of his children, his people.

He shook himself impatiently, striving to rid himself of the crowding thoughts. A strange moisture dampened his forehead.

"What is it that ails me, anyhow?" he muttered.

With an effort, he once more concentrated upon his mission there, forcing to red heat his burning anger against the waste of the funds that had gone for the building of this useless structure. His act would be a blow for freedom from the tyranny of petty taxes and imposts levied only to be squandered at the whim of the Washington lawmakers. This fact, through constant repetition, he had come to believe so firmly that it seemed impossible for him to lose sight of it.

Yet somehow, as he swung to the floor and began his noiseless preparations for the explosion of the bomb, he found that his heart was no longer in his work. Mechanically he opened the bag there in the darkness. It was not desirable to risk so much as a match; but Gariel Lutch needed no light. His sensitive fingers touched and adjusted the contacts and tested the long fuse, which would give him a half hour to escape.

He had not known how to make a time bomb. Besides, he did not trust clockwork. A fuse and dynamite—time-tried, inexpensive, reliable.

There would be a rush of people to the spot. In fancy he could see the splintered pillars, the smoke-begrimed, powder-riven marble; the statue of Lincoln itself—shattered, defiled, overthrown.

### IV

SUDDENLY, in the midst of his preparations, Gariel Lutch halted. It seemed as if a voice had spoken to him; as if an unseen presence, filling the dim, silent room, had manifested itself. Involuntarily he glanced over his shoulder. His intellect told him that it was merely a trick of the nerves, still under the insidious spell of the long hours he had passed in the lonely memorial; but the alien blood of many races, replete with credulity and superstition, pounded with insistent suggestion at his throbbing pulses.

Irresistibly his eyes were drawn to the motionless figure above him. Unaccount-

ably his thoughts leaped back more than thirty years—to a long forgotten day in the eighth grade, when small, tow-headed Gariel had read aloud his composition on Abraham Lincoln, struggling to pronounce the difficult American words which he had not been an American long enough entirely to master. Crystal clear there flashed unsought into his brain the boyhood outline of that splendid life—humble, heroic, self-effacing, divinely human—a man for the ages.

His mind in a turmoil, Gariel Lutch put out an uncertain hand to steady himself against the surging thoughts that beat like hammers upon his whirling brain, striving to clear it of its evil perspectives, its perverted ideals, its false Americanism.

And as he leaned, unnerved, against the firm base of the statue, like a sword of fire there flashed through the fluted pillars of the memorial a dazzling shaft of light, a blinding glory, illuminating the farther wall of the memorial with the clear radiance of noonday.

On the roof of a building in the heart of the city a score of khaki-clad men, grouped about a new army searchlight, were testing its powerful rays on the Lincoln Memorial. But upon Gariel Lutch, standing spell-bound within the cenotaph, the sudden splendor burst with the force of a miracle no less potent than the heavenly light which blinded Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus.

Fascinated, he gazed at the opposite wall. The light was moving. Flickering shadows, cast by intervening objects, played over the tablet; yet here and there a phrase stood clear cut in deeply graven letters against the gleaming marble of the lighter background. And as he read the

words written there, the handwriting on the walls of the ancient Babylonian palace came not as a greater marvel to King Belshazzar and his courtiers than the message which burned this night with letters of fire into the very soul of Gariel Lutch.

—we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we—

Gariel Lutch knew the "Gettysburg Address." What American does not? Yet now, as he read the flaming scroll, the words took on a new meaning, a personal interpretation.

—consecrated—far beyond our power to add or to detract. The world—

Lower fell the slanting rays of the distant searchlight; lower bowed the stubborn head of the awed and silent watcher within the cenotaph.

It is for us to be here dedicated to the great task before us—from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause to which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve—

The beam of light vanished. The spell broke. In the great, unguarded memorial a sobbing man knelt in humble abasement before the shrine of the martyred President, in his heart a new humility and a new consecration to that great nation which the kindly Lincoln loved, and for which he gave his life.

Still stands the Lincoln Memorial, not yet dedicated, in the city of Washington. Yet who can say that that warm spring night in late April did not witness its true dedication—a dedication such as Abraham Lincoln himself would have loved?

### THE IMMORTAL GODS

THE gods are there—they hide their lordly faces

From you that will not kneel.

Worship, and they reveal;

Call—and 'tis they!

They have not changed, nor moved from their high places;

The stars stream past their eyes like drifted spray.

Lovely to look on are they as bright gold;

They are wise with beauty, as a pool is wise,

Lonely with lilies. Very sweet their eyes;

Bathed deep in sunshine are they, and very cold.

*Richard Le Gallienne*

# The Man Who Remembered

HOW JOHN TAVERNER WAS CONFRONTED BY THE GHOST OF HIS OWN PAST

By Perceval Gibbon

IT is at ten o'clock in the morning or thereabouts, when the new day is properly aired and the wheels of trade have been manhandled into motion by early rising underlings, that there appear upon the scene the afterguard of commerce, the solid men who find their offices manned and under way and their desks ready arranged for them. Silk-hatted, decorously clad, nourished by unhurried breakfasts, and instructed in the morning's news, they journey comfortably townward. The city receives in them its active leaven of direction and responsibility, and London is itself again.

Of these was Mr. Taverner. As the nine fifty at Charing Cross came to a stop and seemed to shrug open the long line of its doors, he stepped from a first-class compartment with the cheery and insouciant air of one who is entirely assured of his place and his welcome. He was a shortish man, of that comfortable bulk which is seemly at fifty-eight years or so, with a trimly pointed gray beard and a plump face that was both amiable and shrewd. He turned to speak a friendly farewell to his fellow travelers, tucked his folded newspaper under his arm, and moved off toward the gates of the platform with the buoyant stride of physical and mental well-being.

Upon the other side of the platform an outward-bound train was receiving its passengers to an accompaniment of loudly slamming doors. Mr. Taverner threaded his way through those who came running from the gates to catch it. If he perceived them at all, save as obstacles to be skirted or dodged, it was with a placid tolerance; this jostling was his daily initiation to the atmosphere of his work.

A man with a suit case in either hand and an umbrella carried horizontally under

his arm, cannoned into Mr. Taverner from the left and bumped him painfully. He merely made a little half-humorous grimace of remonstrance as he recoiled and bumped into a woman who was passing behind him. She made an inarticulate sound—a sort of snarl that had all the purpose and offense of an oath—and thrust him away angrily.

"I beg your pardon," began Mr. Taverner hastily. "I really—"

She was not looking at him. She had eyes only for the train in which she sought a place; but the miscreant with the suit cases and the umbrella tore loose from the grouping in which his collision had momentarily jammed them, and delayed her for yet a couple of seconds. Mr. Taverner, his apology bitten off short, with the conciliatory half smile petrified on his face, stood and stared at her.

She paid him no attention. An instant later she had plunged forward once more into the swirl of hastening people and was gone from his sight—a middle-aged dowd with the white and sour face of a shrew; but Mr. Taverner, unmoving in the throng that frothed about him, stood where he was, staring at the place where she had been, with his smile growing rigid and horrible on his whitening lips. From under his slackened arm the folded newspaper fell to the ground at his feet.

"Stand away there!" shouted the porters, as the train gave a little start, like a horse touched with the whip, and commenced to float away, taking with it all the urgency and bustle of the platform.

Mr. Taverner still stood, staring beyond the visible presences about him; but now his plump and sanguine face had blanched, and all in it that was lively and able had shriveled to mere horror and amaze. A



porter marked him and spoke to another. After a brief hesitation they approached him together.

"Ain't you feelin' well, sir?" asked the first of them. "Shall I give you my arm as far as the waitin' room?"

The touch of the man's hand on Mr. Taverner's elbow seemed to recall the passenger from his abstraction. He sighed deeply and turned slowly upon the porter a face that was ghastly and disordered.

"I'm—I'm—all right," he managed to say, in an uncertain whisper, and took three steps toward the gates.

Then, before either of the porters could catch him to hold him up, his legs appeared to crumple under him, and he sank to a sitting posture, saving himself from falling sidewise by a hand that propped him. His silk hat, jerked from his head, rolled along the platform.

The inevitable little crowd came into being about him at once. The words "fit" and "drunk" stood over him doubtfully; but at last a quiet and assured man thrust his way through the ring of gazers.

"I'm a doctor," he said, for sufficient excuse. "And now, sir," he added, as he knelt beside Mr. Taverner, "let's have a look at you!"

Already Mr. Taverner could speak again.

"All right in a minute," he breathed. "Just felt faint. Get a cab presently."

The doctor's hand explored his pulse and the region of his heart, and the doctor's trained and searching eyes his face, where yet there persisted the traces of horror and amaze.

"Had a shock of some kind, I'm afraid?" he said, giving to his remark the tone of a question. Mr. Taverner nodded. "Well, I think you'd better let us help you to the waiting room, and perhaps I can get you a little brandy."

The big waiting room, grave as a church, afforded to Mr. Taverner a measure of the privacy he needed in order to restore to his countenance and bearing their customary outwardness of decorum and assurance. The brandy which the doctor magically procured in that droughty and liquorless hour of the forenoon gave him back some of his color. In the half hour during which he sat there he seemed to recover all that had gone from him at that encounter upon the platform. He was able to stand, to thank the doctor, to tip the helpful porters, and to walk to his cab steadily enough.

It was only when the taxi had left the station, and turned along the Strand, that he showed at the window a face which looked upon the life of the streets with the expression of one who looks upon a world of ghosts. The common figures of every day, the familiar traffic of the town—he seemed to regard it with a strained and fearful curiosity, as if he beheld a thing grotesque and perilous.

His office was over the chief of his shops in Oxford Street—he was the principal proprietor of a small but prosperous string of grocery shops—and among his clerks the fact that he was late was in itself an event. He was aware of their stares as he passed through the outer office to his own room; aware, too, that they marked in him the traces of his recent experience. His manager, following him in with a letter basket full of papers, spoke of it.

"You're not looking quite yourself this morning, sir," he said. "I hope there's nothing wrong."

He was a large-featured young man, competent as any other narrowly specialized machine, as mild and as little imaginative as a sheep. He stood beside his employer's desk, looking down at him with respectful solicitude. The manager could not guess that Mr. Taverner, returning his gaze, was full of wonder—sheer wonder—at his existence.

"Yes," said Mr. Taverner. "I've had—I've had some bad news."

"Sorry to hear that, sir."

"Yes—bad news!" Mr. Taverner frowned doubtfully at the letter basket and its heaped documents. "I can't attend to these this morning," he decided. "Take them away, and do the best you can. And look here—ring up Bohun's at once, will you?—the inquiry agency, you know. Tell them to send me a good man at once."

"Bohun's, sir?" The mild young man's characterless stare was tinged with interest. "Send you a—a detective, sir?"

Mr. Taverner repressed an impulse to shout at him impatiently.

"Of course!" he said crisply. "At once! And shut the door as you go out."

## II

For many years, till the thing lost its savor through much repetition, Mr. Taverner had been accustomed to account for himself to friends and acquaintances by saying:

"Well, as a matter of fact, I was a foundling."

Not till they had been led to a thorough misunderstanding, and visions of some latter-day Moses in the bulrushes, would he enhance the marvel of his origin by explaining the matter. It was thirty years now since he had been carried to hospital from among the débris of an omnibus overturned in a fog. He was then a young man of pallid face, clad in cheap, worn clothes. Those who attended to him guessed—they had no other way of telling—that he was about twenty-eight years of age. They found in his pockets nearly five pounds in gold and silver, but of papers, letters, or other means of identification not a scrap.

He had been grievously injured about the head in the accident. Only inspired surgery, by a man whose fame yet endures, had availed to save his mere life; and it was weeks before, helmeted in bandages, frail and ghostly upon his pillow, he had looked up with understanding in his eyes and rediscovered the faculty of speech.

The great surgeon's repairs and alterations to his skull had made him a phenomenon. As in other cases, inside and outside of hospitals, it needed disaster to make him noticeable. In due season he was deftly and expertly questioned.

"Your name?" The quiet-voiced, watchful physician by the bedside never took his alert eyes from the injured man's face. "Think quietly. Try to tell me what your name is."

They repeated strings of Christian names to him, with their diminutives. He listened intently, seeming anxious to hear one that never came; but in the end the result was always the same.

"I don't know," he would murmur, wearily and helplessly. "There's nothing there; I can't remember anything!"

Nothing availed. The trepanning, bone-grafting, splinter-extracting—all the surgeon's ingenious carpentry to stanch entirely the leak in that bulwark of the brain. Something had escaped; what remained was a mind naked of all human experience, stripped of memory, a field ripe for any tillage.

Things that had become integral in the very structure of the intellect survived. He could speak, he could count, and, with pauses of effort, he could add numbers together. Moreover, he could learn; but of his past life, up to the moment when his

head had struck the pavement, and the horses, plunging and thrashing, had surged back upon him, there was nothing. The pages of the brain were wiped clean.

Once upon the mend, he made a rapid recovery toward physical health. Presently he was moving about the ward and the small garden of the establishment, docile, feebly amiable, happy when called upon to aid the nurses in any small matter, untroubled by any fate that might have been his in the lost years.

The police, called in to help account for him, reported that no one at all resembling him was on their list of missing men. There came no inquiries, no clew at all. The world that he had lost seemed content to resign him.

He stood for some time in danger of a pauper lunatic asylum; but, fortunately, among his doctors there was one of humanity and sagacity. When he was restored to strength and bodily health, this physician found him employment with his own grocer, and the patient left the hospital to grope his way toward a new identity in place of that which had been stripped from him. He picked himself a name at random from a directory—Taverner—added John to it, and was thus born anew.

His employer, the grocer, was a silent, competent, and kindly Scotsman, willing enough to be considerate to this victim of freakish circumstance. As the months passed, the newly labeled recruit to the grocery trade needed consideration less and less. He was delightfully willing and quick to learn. He devoted himself to his work as if with an ardent and insatiate desire to give a distinctive character of industry and efficiency to his new life. His good nature was inexhaustible; he was as innocent of vices as a baby. Customers liked him and trusted him.

"Do ye not think, seein' the way ye're takin' hold, that maybe ye were a grocer, or a grocer's man, before?" his employer asked him once.

John Taverner, white-aproned, was at his counter. He gave to his questioner a steady, serious look.

"I've tried to remember," he said. "At first, I used to puzzle over it till I nearly went crazy; but I can't remember anything—and now I don't want to."

"Eh? An' why not?"

Taverner shook his head.

"Perhaps I was all right," he said; "but perhaps I wasn't. Suppose suddenly I remembered that I was a criminal or something!"

The Scotsman uttered one of his rare laughs.

"Criminal!" he repeated. "Man, have sense! Doctors can't make chaps like you out o' thieves an' murderers!"

Between four and five in the afternoon it was customary for the shopman to go upstairs to the grocer's home over the shop, for his tea. The Scotsman was a widower with one daughter—a buxom, tranquil lass, one of those women who are matronly in their girlhood, and yet preserve a virginal quality throughout life. Daily she poured for Taverner his two cups of tea, and cut his bread and butter. Daily he brought to her his mild and happy countenance, and all his strengthening effect of ready friendliness and willingness to please. Daily, too, she added herself to his new equipment of human experience, taking in the make-up of his mind a place in which, at least, no previous occupant had left any trace.

Of course, they talked a good deal about his condition. In the first year or so, every one who knew him had that for a staple topic; but he had been with the grocer for more than a year before their talk took on its inevitable purpose.

"It's queer about you forgetting *everything*," she said. "In all those years there ought to be *something* that you couldn't just blow out like you blow out a candle. Your mother, now?"

He shook his head.

"Perhaps my mother died when I was born," he suggested. "At any rate, there's nothing."

"Or"—she bent above the loaf she was cutting—"your wife?"

"Yes," he agreed. "I've been thinking a lot about that, of late; but I can't remember. It doesn't seem possible that a married man could vanish like that with never a question asked—without anybody even going to the police, does it? There were twelve men missing in the week that I had my accident. All that weren't too old or too big to be me have been found, dead or alive; so it seems to me that whoever my friends and relations were, they were glad enough to get rid of me!"

"I'm not thinking that," she answered, and looked up at him. "If there was a

wife, she'd have wanted you and found you."

It was nearly five years later that that talk bore fruit in their marriage. The grocer had died. An attack of pneumonia, nearly as sudden as a bus accident, had removed him, too, to a new world and to who knows what new knowledge and experience. All he possessed, his business and the harvest of his lifelong thrift, descended to his daughter.

In all that time there had come to John Taverner no gleam or echo from the hidden past. Questings with the aid of police and private agents furnished no clew, no least hint, not even a convincing theory.

They had thriven. First there had been an amalgamation with the business of the dead Scotsman's brother, also a grocer; and from these beginnings the concern had enlarged as by some natural and steady process of growth. Mr. Taverner and his wife had passed into the sober comfort of middle age in contentment and ease. She was still buxom and tranquil, a kindly and lovable companion. Together they had found and settled into their groove, and the strangeness of the events that had made it possible for them to come together was dulled in the perspective of the years. Whatever paths Mr. Taverner had trodden ere he came to the turning of the bus accident were overgrown by the weeds of time. They were safe!

### III

THAT morning the walls that had shut Mr. Taverner in and defended him had been breached. The stout-bodied, thin-faced shrew in the station—the thirty years that had mellowed and remade him had not been sufficient to disguise her. It was as if she had protruded her bitter countenance through a curtain, rending it so that it fell apart, revealing to Mr. Taverner all the past that had been hidden from him. It came sudden as a blow, and like a blow it had felled him.

"Her name was Clara," he said half aloud, in the privacy of his room. "And we'd been married three years. My God!"

He was leaning with both elbows on his desk, his head in his hands. He raised it as the door handle turned and his manager came in and announced, in hushed tones:

"The detective, sir!"

The "private inquiry agent" revealed himself as a large, swarthy man with a

formidable mustache and the misfit look of a policeman in plain clothes.

"Mornin', sir," he said, with a sort of perfunctory official heartiness. "Nothin' much wrong here, I hope?"

"Sit down," said Mr. Taverner.

While the large man arranged himself in the chair at the other side of the desk, and found a place for his hat, he gathered himself together.

"There's nothing wrong," he said. "I want to have a certain person traced, and I desire some information about her. The last knowledge of her that I have is thirty years old."

The large man nodded.

"Long time, that, sir!" he said. "Still, if you'll just give me the particulars, an' if she's still alive—"

"She was alive an hour ago," interrupted Mr. Taverner. He drew a sheet of paper toward him and took up a pencil. "Her name," he said, "was Tyler—Mrs. Clara Tyler. I'll write it for you."

He bent above the paper and wrote. He he had need to hide his face for an instant. The name—his own lost name—stabbed him with a strange, hurtful emotion.

"She lived then at—" he went on.

He spoke and wrote the particulars as they came to him—her maiden name and the address of her parents, the names and addresses of her two brothers, her married sister, her prosperous uncle, the builder, and others.

The detective took the paper and scanned it frowningly.

"Ye-es," he said. "An' what kind of information might you be wantin', sir?"

"Anything you can get," replied Mr. Taverner. "Everything you can get, and as soon as possible—where she lives, and how; whether she's poor or not, whether she's—er—happy, and all that. The main thing is to find her. Do you think you can do it?"

"Well, sir," said the large man, "thirty years is a long time; but you've given me here the names of fourteen people, none of 'em livin' far off; an' without makin' promises, I should say it was a certainty. I take it the lady isn't to know she's bein' inquired after?"

"No," said Mr. Taverner. "If there's anything to tell her, I'll tell her myself."

"Very good, sir!"

The large man rose and reached for his hat. He looked at Mr. Taverner with an

interest in which there was no curiosity. He earned his daily bread from bigamists, blackmailers, and the like—a parasite batten- ing upon society's malignant growth. He could have believed anything of Mr. Taverner save that he was honest, virtuous, and law-abiding.

"Of course, sir," he suggested, "all that you say to me is in confidence. If I knew what your interest in this here lady was, I'd be able to help you better."

Mr. Taverner shook his head.

"I'm not sure what it is myself," he answered, strangely.

He went home early that day.

"A bit out of sorts," he explained to his wife, adding vaguely: "It's the weather, perhaps."

While she bustled about him, profuse in suggestions for a call upon the local doctor, a day in bed on the morrow, and the like, he was watching her, estimating her, as if he saw her for the first time. In all things she was good, a piece of sterling womanhood, stanch and loyal to simple, decent ideals, kind to the bone, clean in the soul as in the body. In the light of the knowledge that had come to him of himself as he had been, he perceived that he had had need to be born again, cleansed by pain, ere it was possible that he and she should belong to each other.

#### IV

AFTER their evening meal Mr. and Mrs. Taverner sat together according to their custom, he to one side of the fire, she to the other. She was darning socks. He had let his newspaper drop, and was marking, almost unconsciously, how all her attitudes and mannerisms were still faithful to his earliest memories of her.

"Anything in the papers, John?" she asked presently.

"Eh?" He started from his reverie. "Oh, murders, burglaries, divorces," he answered. "A lot of ugly things! It's an ugly world when you see it through a newspaper, Annie." An idea took hold of him. "I came across an ugly little affair up in town recently, that's rather stuck in my mind."

She looked up.

"Oh?" she inquired. "And is that what you've been thinking about? I knew there was something!"

"Did you?" He stared at her, and she smiled back. He realized that he must be



careful. "I was just watching you here and thinking how different all this is to the—er—story I was speaking of. Seems to me there's only two kinds of people, Annie—the good and the bad."

"But what's the story, John?"

"Oh, the story! Just an affair of two young people who couldn't make their two lives into one—miserable, underbred, underfed little creatures, married for a whim, and making a little private hell of a little jerry-built home. The man was a third-rate clerk with a firm in the city, pilfering from the petty cash and the stamp drawer, betting in shillings on horses, drinking and loafing—just a mean little piece of two-legged London vermin. His name," added Mr. Taverner, gazing into the fire, "was Tyler."

"Tyler!" repeated Annie in a murmur.

"The woman," went on her husband, "was a better type than he, stronger, more resistant, but poor enough at that—the type of girl you see by scores in the streets of any lively suburb in the evening. You know—flimsy, anæmic, small-boned, with just that pitiful touch of youthful prettiness that stands no more wear than the bloom on a peach; but they have courage and a sort of vicious spiritedness, and in nothing are they more courageous than in their marriages."

"Most of the story almost tells itself. One can picture to oneself that horrid little house that never had a chance, the girl's shrill resentment, her complainings and abuse, the vileness of the man, and his utter weariness of the discomfort and hatefulness of it. His public house and other resorts began to cost him more; his pilferings and various small dishonesties increased; there was danger for him in the state of his accounts, disaster that might pounce on him at any moment. He was—I expect he was very wretched, frightened, and worried, needing drink to give his mind and body the only peace they got, with nerves less and less able to endure the shrill, raw voice of anger and contempt that was raised to receive him whenever he entered at his own door. One could pity him—couldn't one, Annie?—for that time of trouble, if it hadn't been the only punishment he got."

"Yes, I think so," said Annie, darning industriously.

"But it was his only punishment," went on Mr. Taverner. "Except for that, he

got off scot-free. Instead of disaster, deliverance swooped down upon him—deliverance in the only form he could appreciate and profit by. You see, salvation means different things to different men, my dear. For him it meant escape from his worries, at any cost, save detection and punishment; and the cost was small. He was a thief and a wastrel already; what did another theft matter to him? But the petty cash was never large enough in amount, and its disappearance would have been discovered before he could have bought a railway ticket with it. All doors were closed to him; and then, as I said, there came deliverance. It was a Saturday, and near to closing time. He happened for about two minutes to be alone in the office. It was just a chance. The chief clerk was out on business, and the remaining one had taken a customer up to the sample room. Even the office boy had gone to carry the day's letters to the post office. Up to the counter came one of the firm's travelers. He came like a man in a hurry.

"'Here!' he said ungently. 'Where's the chief clerk?'"

"'Engaged,' replied Tyler. 'Probably be here in ten minutes or so.'"

"The traveler swore impatiently."

"'My wife's at Brighton, and I want to get down there,' he explained. 'I'll miss my train at this rate! I say, could you give me a receipt for this and hand it to him when he comes?'"

"'This' was a folded packet of five-pound and ten-pound notes—two hundred pounds in all. Tyler hesitated, for it was none of his business to issue receipts; and then, suddenly, in a blaze of vision, he saw his opportunity. He scrawled an acknowledgment, stamped and signed it, saw the traveler out, and found himself alone with the money. Instantly his plan was born, full-grown, in his thief's mind. He crammed the notes into his pocket. His plan wasn't a bad one. He would change one ten-pound note immediately, and the rest he would post to himself under an assumed name at some provincial town, whither he could go that night. On Monday he would claim the money, before the numbers could be notified to the banks, and depart elsewhere. The world was wide, and he was small. It would not be difficult for him to find a safe crevice to crawl into, secure against discovery and

his deservings; and that was actually what he set out to do.

"You can imagine him, can't you, boozing away that afternoon in saloons, brooding upon his plan, elaborating it, enjoying it? He had posted his money to York. There was a train that evening at eight o'clock; and probably, if he had not been drinking, he would not have gone to his home at all. Or perhaps he wanted a last sight of his dreadful little wife, a final impression of her nagging and screeching at him, the better to taste the flavor of his escape. If that was it, he got what he wanted. Bills were overdue for food and rent. Collectors had called in the afternoon, and had not been civil when the wretched wife had failed to pay them. She was all but hysterical with rancor and resentment and the sense of her own misfortunes. She met him with such a torrent of abuse that for the moment he was daunted. He stood dumb and abashed on the threshold while she raged at him, till anger and hate rose in him and he strode within to where she was and struck her in the face. He had never struck her before, for he had never dared to do so. It was his farewell, the one spontaneous and sincere gesture in all his life of falsehood and pretense. Then, slamming the door behind him, he went forth into the wet of the gathering evening.

"He was a full hour earlier than he had intended. He slouched away to pass the time. His home was at Hammersmith, and he came out at length to where a small street ran down to the mud of the river bank. His mind was running on his plan by this time, and he bethought him that here was the place to get rid of such obvious proofs of identity as the letters in his pockets. He tore them into bits and scattered them where the next tide would gather them. As he turned back, he noted a mean shop with festoons of second-hand clothing hanging to each side of the door. Here, upon a sudden impulse, he made a change from the clothes he was wearing to garments of a different appearance and color, and gained a couple of shillings on the transaction. He was ready now for his adventure.

"And so, in darkness and chill, with the mist from the river driving up through the streets, he departed toward his goal and away from his burdens and his fears. The wife, crying in the empty house—if she

waited for him, she still waits. She never heard of him again."

He ceased. Annie was still placidly pushing the large needle with its limp tail of wool to and fro.

"Things like these happen," said Mr. Taverner. "They happen without ceasing; but not to us, Annie. We're different, aren't we? Don't you feel that we are different, that we have a right to our peace and our happiness?"

She made a little murmuring sound that might have been meant for thoughtful assent.

"Who told you that story, John?" she asked.

"Who told me?"

"Yes," she said. "Was it Tyler himself? Because you tell all that he did when he was alone, with no one to watch him, and what he said, and the plans he made, and all that."

Mr. Taverner smiled and shook his head.

"I tried to make the tale complete," he said, "and to fill in the gaps reasonably. I think, if we could know all, I have not been far from the truth."

He was startled, though, at her penetration. The tale he had told her was of course his own. If ever there should come a need to speak openly, to confess in terms of plain fact, at least the story was known to her. He had only to claim it.

## V

It was two days later that the private detective, unchanged in any least detail, from boot laces to rigid blue tie, was shown in to Mr. Taverner's room at the office. After his greeting—that, too, did not vary—he produced from his breast pocket a folded typewritten paper.

"Well, sir!" he said. "It hasn't taken very long, has it? Here's all particulars obtainable so far, but more will be forthcoming if required." He spread open the folded paper. "What threw me off the track at first was the fact that the lady isn't Mrs. Tyler at all—not now!"

"Eh,"

"No, sir." He sought details upon his typewritten screed. "Married first at Hammersmith, in 1887, to Alfred Tyler, clerk; widow in 1890; remarried in 1891 to James Albert Horrocks, cab proprietor. Two children by her present husband. You'll find it all here, sir, address and everything."

He passed the paper over. Mr. Taverner took it and scanned it.

"This Tyler," he said, "her first husband—you didn't get any particulars about him?"

The detective shook his head.

"It was the lady you mentioned, sir, and I took it you was in a hurry. I did hear something, in the course of conversation, about him having been killed in an accident of some sort."

"What sort of an accident?" demanded Mr. Taverner quickly. "Not a bus accident, was it?"

"Ah, that I don't know, sir, but I could easy get particulars for you."

Mr. Taverner considered.

"No," he said. "No need to get particulars. I'll let you know if there's anything more to be done."

His single desire in the matter was to do what was right. For thirty years he had had no other desire. To claim in all things his due, to render to others that which was due to them—this was the essence of his morality; while to look facts in the face, to handle circumstance with bare hands—this was his principle of tactics. And it was thus inspired that he found himself, at noon, in the High Street of a southeastern suburb of London, looking up at a sign that announced:

J. A. HORROCKS—JOB AND LIVERY

The stables were up a passageway where a languid man was washing a cab with a hose. Mr. Taverner learned that J. A. Horrocks resided in a small, square house to one side of the entry.

"Better than she had in Hammersmith, at any rate," commented Mr. Taverner, as he knocked at the front door.

The woman herself opened it to him. To the salute of his raised hat she gave no acknowledgment, merely fronting him with the cheerless glare of her white, sour face and waiting for him to speak.

"Is this Mrs. Horrocks?" inquired Mr. Taverner.

"Well?" demanded the woman.

"Formerly Mrs. Tyler, I believe. This is my card," said Mr. Taverner, holding it forth to her. At first she made no motion to take it. "I am seeking some information about the late Alfred Tyler."

She took the card then. In her bitter face was suspicion, ill humor, impatience, and at his last words it seemed to him that

it showed a furtive fear; but though she stared at him unwinkingly, it gave no token of recognition.

"He's been dead thirty years next month," she said, with a sort of angry scorn. "Buried at Brook Green, he was; you can go an' look at his grave for yourself. I *did* give him a headstone, anyhow."

"Buried!" repeated Mr. Taverner. "You say he was buried?"

"Why, what else would you do with a dead man?"

She had begun to shrill at him. Her voice still had every tone of its old quality; but it died down toward the end of her sentence. She poked her head out and glanced along the street from side to side, as if in fear of being overheard.

"Here!" she said. "You'd better come inside. We can't stand talkin' on the doorstep!"

Within, she faced him in a small, gloomy parlor, its window blocked by plants in flowerpots and stiff muslin curtains. She had worn badly. Of the feebly pretty girl he remembered there survived only the virago quality and a snakelike energy of venom.

"And now, what's it all about?" she demanded sharply. "I heard there'd been somebody askin' questions, the lars' day or two."

"That," said Mr. Taverner, "was a detective." He paused to let the word and its implication have their effect, and saw her hand go out and clutch the edge of a table. "I want to know how Alfred Tyler died."

She was staring at him, but now the fear was plain on her face. Still she did not know him.

"He was drowned," she answered. "He left me—a Saturday night it was—an' I never saw him alive again. His body was took out o' the river. There was an inquest."

"And you identified the body?"

She shuddered.

"It was him, all right—his clo'es, an' all but his face. He must have been dragged under a steamer, they said. He'd only bought his clo'es the month before. It wasn't only me—the man from the shop where he'd bought 'em came forward an' swore to 'em."

Mr. Taverner recalled again the dirty little shop where he had exchanged those

clothes for others, the snuffling Jew who haggled with him, the smell and the dirt. Evidently there had been a quick customer for them. He looked at her gravely, shaking his head as if in rebuke. She tried to return his look defiantly.

"What d'ye mean?" she cried, but her fear mastered her, and she broke down. "Oh, for Gawd's sake, don't tell me he's alive! Don't—don't, sir! You don't know—an' me with a husband and two growin' girls! It's ruin! You don't know what he was. He'd robbed his firm, he left me without a penny in the house, an' the lars' thing he did was to hit me in the face an' knock me down. An' Horrocks, he's been a good man to me. *Don't* say Alfred's alive, sir!"

"But," insisted Mr. Taverner, "you knew that the man who was buried at Brook Green was not Alfred Tyler."

She had her apron to her eyes now.

"I didn't know, not really. His face—it wasn't a face, and the clo'es was his. I—I hoped it was him; an' now you come an' tell me he's alive!"

Mr. Taverner threw up his head and breathed deeply. His course was clear. He had but to speak the truth and shed ruin around him, for Alfred Tyler, he perceived, could do nothing but evil. He seemed to carry a plague with him, con-

taminating and destroying all with whom he came in contact. Only in his grave was he harmless.

"Nothing of the kind," he said briskly. The woman lowered her apron and stared at him in a desperation of hope. "I came to get information, and I've got it—that's all."

"And—and Alfred, sir?"

He was moving toward the door. He stopped and turned to her.

"Dead," he said. "Dead in his sins, undoubtedly. You've nothing to fear, Mrs. Horrocks!"

Late in the afternoon he let fall the curtain upon that sad farce, that meaningless tragedy, which had been the life and death of Alfred Tyler. It took him an hour of exploration in the small cemetery at Brook Green ere he found what he sought.

"Sacred to the memory of Alfred Tyler," the inscription said, followed by dates of birth and death. "The beloved husband of Clara Tyler—R. I. P."

He looked down at it, smiling faintly. Then he spoke.

"Rest easy, friend," he said. "You've earned it. You saved four of us that night!"

He raised his hat in a gesture of farewell, and turned and went back to Annie.

#### THE HAUNTED HOUSE

I KNEW a house gray-shingled and old;  
Its windows were barred and its hearth was long cold,  
And I dare say its cupboards were covered with mold—  
That house in the heart of the wood.

And sometimes the town folk went tiptoeing by,  
And said it was haunted—that ghosts seemed to sigh  
In its square, empty rooms. I knew better, though, I!  
But nobody else understood.

I knew that its ghosts were fair dreams of the past,  
And laughter and youth—things that never could last;  
And I knew it was lonely for things that fled fast  
To fill all its echoing dearth.

I knew, for my heart was that house in the wood,  
And it echoed with longing—till you understood  
And flung wide its windows, as only you could,  
And lighted the fire on its hearth.

*Theda Kenyon*



# The Speed Package

THE CHEERFUL ROMANCE OF A YOUNG BASEBALL STAR WHO  
WAS SWIFT ON THE DIAMOND AND NOT SLOW IN LOVE

By James W. Egan

**I**N the old and alleged good days a scout was a baby that jazzed around making signs for cigar stores out of the noble red brothers, or knocking the blithe-some buffalo for a row of sirloins; but in this age of short incomes and skirts he's a cracker of another cast.

Nowadays, instead of dolling up in a well tailored deerhide cutaway, and the latest from Paris in coonskin caps, and packing a rifle longer than a wait for a telephone number, the scout wears a derby hat, gold teeth, and a hardened expression. He sleeps not under the stars, but in a lower berth, whenever he can glom it. He fears no roughneck redskin as he fears the highbiding hotel man and dining-car chow.

Like the moccasined marathoners of the past, however, he still sticks to the trackless wilds and plunges fearlessly into unexplored territory. He is, mainly, a hunter seeking fresh meat. No longer, however, does he crave venison chops and bear tenderloin; he looks for healthy young men with agile feet, keen lamps, and strong soup bones—young men who not only can sock the seamed apple, but also shag it with skill and technique.

If Daniel Boone and Kit Carson made history, so have the scouts who don't know the difference between a flintlock and Flint, Michigan, but who appreciate good batting averages and speed around the old burlaps. Baseball owes more to its scouts than can be put into expense accounts. Of course, they pick lemons with the lions; but no doubt the boys in buckskin also made their little mistakes when scalps were considered nifty parlor ornaments in our leading wigwams and teepees.

Among sand-lot sleuths and tall timber trappers Hub Hoyle, of the Cinnamons,

has long been acknowledged one of the most gifted guys that ever gumshoed into a small-time grand stand and tossed a well trained toothpick amid his bicuspid while he watched the ardent athletes do their nine stanzas.

Hub has uncovered more demons of the diamond than all the rest of the Cinnamon spotters put together. Nor is Hub one of these choosers who shove out fifty or a hundred grand for press-agented peaches in the twin A loops. He prefers to dive deep into the brush and yank forth some bullet who costs less than a second-hand sweat shirt, and who is as likely as not to be worth a mortgage on the mint in a couple of seasons.

Any time Hub Hoyle trots into Cinnamon headquarters after a long absence, everybody goes from at ease to attention mighty pronto. That's just what occurred one day last summer, while Bill Pratt, manager of the club, was talking pay roll with yours secretarily. Dusty and dirty, yet wearing his derby well back, our prize scout lumbered into the office.

"Hello, Hub!" greets the Cinnamon leader. "What's new?"

"Everything except the eggs I had for my breakfast," promptly returns Hoyle. "Gosh, I'm tired. I been farther away from civilization than *Robinson Crusoe* was, and it's taken me almost as long to get back as it does for St. Louis to place in a world's series. You fellows ever hear of *Ivanhoe*?"

"I think I read it when I was a boy," Bill Pratt answers.

"Read it? I wouldn't have believed it was on the time-tables that long," gargles Hub. "Well, anyway, it's still in the same State—Idaho; or maybe I should say the same two States—Idaho and unconscious.

Speaking of Idaho, it's a nice, large place. They call people near neighbors whenever they're not over a week's walk apart."

The Cinnamon manager, knowing the scout of old, laughed. Hoyle had his own fashion of telling things.

"So you've been to Ivanhoe, Idaho?" Bill observes. "Did you make any discoveries there?"

"Several, including the world's worst hotel," said the scout, sadly shaking his head.

"You and Columbus—what a pair! As to the other discoveries—have you got me a couple of marvels, Hub?"

"Marvels, Bill? A flock, a bevy, a crew, a gang of marvels—all done up in one package," enthuses the scout. "He's named Clif Ensign. The sooner we have him on a rattler, Cinnamon bound, the better. He's got a contract now."

"Ah!" Bill remains calm. "What does Mr. Ensign do, and who is he?"

"Well," responds Hoyle, grinning, "he's a college man playing summer ball in the sticks—out of Yale or Harvard, I think, or possibly it's Princeton or Dartmouth or Cornell."

"You seem to have overlooked Penn State, Rutgers, Washington and Jefferson, and some others," Bill comments. "Yes, yes—go on, Hub."

"He's a wonderful saxophone player," continues the scout. "Wonderful—the best in Ivanhoe; probably the only one, but at all events, the best. How he can knock out jazz!"

"Pray do not stop!" the Cinnamon manager entreats. "I would hear more."

"He's a jazzing fool himself. Oh, a great dancer! Good-looking boy, too, and wears classy clothes. Full of pep and snappy stuff, you know. All the girls in Ivanhoe adore him. Think of it! Swell saxophone player, swell dancer, swell dresser, swell talker—what frail frill could resist such a combination?"

"Keep on, Hub!" Bill squawks. "Keep on until I kill you. It won't be long now."

"You wanted to know what he does," Hub urged defensively.

"To be sure, to be sure! Of course the Cinnamons can always find room for a saxophone player, a swell dresser, and a high-class jazz dancer. What big-league club couldn't use such talent? If he only was able to pick a little on the ukulele, it would be simply perfect."

"Probably he can—he's been to college," says Hub.

"Heavenly! But all the apple sauce to one side, Hub, what does Mr. Ensign do in the moments when he deserts his beloved saxophone and other interests for the crude pastime known as baseball?"

The scout chuckles.

"Nothing much, Bill. He's just a young outfielder who can hit and throw and catch anything knocked into his precinct; and he gets down to first base faster than a black man leaving a graveyard at midnight."

"He's really fast, Hub?"

"Quicker than a married woman's eye, Bill. He's about the speediest kid I ever threw glims on, and he ought to win a job in any outfield."

"We'll have to look at him, if he's so good, Hub," the manager chirps. "He gets transportation to-day. I can use a swift lad in right."

When the scout had left us, Bill Pratt turned to me with a beaming map.

"Oh, boy!" he expresses. "If Hub has picked another young phenom, this ball club will be sitting pretty! We're up there now, and we'll stay up. A speedy kid to work along with Tommy Langlow and Beak Parrott would make me some outfield! I wonder if Hub was kidding me about that saxophone stuff, though?"

## II

IN the next day or two we forgot all about Ensign. The Cinnamon club changed hands, the ownership of the majority stock passing into the hands of Adolph Block, the millionaire sausage monarch. Block knew as much about baseball as I do of what went into his celebrated sausages. Although nothing happened the first few days, we all expected trouble on the way.

Things were still as uncertain as a future in the navy when Clif Ensign, of Ivanhoe, Idaho, bowed into the home city of the Cinnamons, a week or so later. He was a tall, browned, handsome kid, with an air of independence that verged on being cocky. His clothes had all the snap and jazz hinted at by Hub Hoyle. There wasn't a gaudier dresser on the team, and the Cinnamons never lacked for fancy rag wearers, either.

The importation from Ivanhoe got a chance to do his stuff the first week he joined the club. Plenty of birds who are

riots in the rutabaga circuits go up to the big show every season, but few of them bust into the line-up right off the bat. Most of them pull a parking act in the concrete house each afternoon for weeks.

Zeke Flick, veteran right fielder of the Cinnamons, had bum legs, however, and Bill Pratt shoved Ensign out into the suburbs the second day he was in town. We were battling the Phils, and it was a fine opportunity to break in a youngster.

All the new recruit did was to make a running catch and to help himself to four blows, three of which were infield dinkies that he raced out. Hub Hoyle yodeled something when he said this kid was fast. He was the speediest lad Cinnamon fans had seen in years. Down to first he flashed like a canine ahead of a can. It was as plain as the Woolworth Building on New York's sky line that Hub had dug up another gem.

Bill Pratt left the young speed merchant in the starboard garden, and he continued to go like pennies in a cafeteria. At the end of a week Cinnamontown was raving over him.

"Unless he does a terrible flop, Zeke Flick is going to rest his pegs the remainder of the season," the manager tells me. "Looks like he might burn up the league. Boy, he's fast!"

Ensign came to the club early in July, and by the first of August he was already a sensation. Every pilot in the loop was cussing his luck and his scouts for missing out on the Idaho marvel. The kid could hit and field, but it was his great speed that made him stand out.

Thanks to the punch he added to our already strong line-up, the Cinnamons were right up among the leaders and giving the Giants a merry old run. It had been rumored around that Block, the sausage king, was in favor of removing Bill Pratt as manager; but the way the club was going he had a fat chance to get across with anything of the kind. He chirped nothing, and Bill kept busy on the job.

Possibly a month after Clif Ensign had come to us the Cinnamons were doing a stand at home with the Cards, and Bill Pratt was browsing through the morning papers with me when I heard him give a little chirp.

"Well, listen to this, Frank!" he squawks. "There's a yarn in here saying that one of the features of the big charity

program given for the relief of the orphaned Swiss girls next Saturday night will be a saxophone solo by Mr. Clifford Ensign. That must be our young outfielder!"

"Sure it is," I affirm. "Didn't Hub say he could knock jazz out of one? And Josh Twain was telling me the other day he sobbed forth blues real wicked."

"But how come he gets mixed up in this Swiss orphan benefit? That's society stuff. Guess he shows speed off as well as on the diamond!"

"Oh, don't you know, Bill?" I warble. "One of the chief backers of this charity program is Miss Adeline Block, only daughter of our charming new boss."

"That's it, huh? But who told her Ensign was a saxophone player? Or does she know him?"

"I think she does," I inform him. "He's a college man, and can handle himself in society. I shouldn't wonder but what he bumped into her dancing at one of the swell hotels. He's a hound for jazz, like Hub said."

"Do you know, in some ways this lad is a peculiar pecan?" Bill gets off thoughtfully. "Christy Walsh, who carries around a degree himself, was telling me that Ensign claims to have gone to some obscure university in the Far West, and is very vague with details. Christy is a bit suspicious about the lad."

"Don't he think Ensign is a college man?"

"Oh, yes—Christy says he is that; but he thinks maybe he went to some institution in the East, and is trying to hide the fact he has turned professional. Ensign never talks about his folks, either."

"All of which don't prevent him from playing a mean brand of ball," I chirp. "That kid has certainly stirred things up on this club, hasn't he? Do you notice the line of dizzy chatter he cuts loose now and then? He's got Josh Twain worried. He's liable to steal away his laurels as chief comic of the outfit."

"That's nothing to worry about," the Cinnamon manager yodels. "I wonder what old Block will think of his daughter taking up with our musical outfielder! He kind of looks down on ball tossers as a class, I think."

"A couple of millions don't give nobody the right to look down on anybody," I wheeze out, and that ended the guff.

Together with Josh Twain and several

other athletes, I happened to be in the café of the Metro Hotel—our home hang-out—the Sunday morning following the charity program, taking on breakfast, when Cliff Ensign ambled in on us.

"Come hither, you musical genius," invites Twain, the Cinnamon cut-up. "I would congratulate and felicitate thee upon last night's triumph. I was at the benefit for the dear little Swiss cheeses—I mean, orphans. You shake a sinful saxophone, Clifford. With your talent you ought to be in the—in the movies!"

"Thanks, thanks, good Joshua!" returns the outfielder, seating himself at our table. "Your praise reminds me of a line from Pope, with which you are doubtless familiar. I shall not repeat it. Yes, waiter, I'll have grapefruit, toast, and two eggs. One of the eggs must be good."

"Ain't it funny," Josh goes on, a trifle uncertainly, "that we all have our weaknesses? Here we have a youth destined to be a great ball player. A wonderful future before him. The world in homage at his feet. And yet what does he do? He who can play so well—plays the saxophone!"

"Don't cry on your ham, Josh," Ensign kindly advises. "Of course, we all have our failings. Now you are a bit peculiar yourself, Comrade Twain."

"How so?" suspiciously.

"Well, for instance, do you stir your coffee with the left or right hand?" briskly demands Ensign.

"With my right hand," replies Josh.

"That's peculiar," comes snappily.

"Most persons use a spoon."

"Bring this baby his breakfast!" roars Twain, after the laughter that ensued.

"He takes my mind off the food."

Twain and I had a cigar together after the meal, and Josh spoke feelingly of the new gardener.

"It ain't only his feet that have speed," he warbles. "He has a fast line, too, especially with the fluffs. If I'm not dizzier than a ride in a roller coaster, this Miss Block has fallen for our handsome Cliff. He wouldn't have been on that bill last night if—well, I got my ideas, Frank. Wish a dame worth a couple of million berries would give me a tumble! Why was I born clever instead of rich?"

"And the fair Miss Block likes Ensign?" I quiz.

"You're yodeling something. For the last week, ever since they met at a dance,

she has had her lamps on him. I think they've been out once, and they will be again. He's a jazzing fool, and the janes like his style."

"Soft for Ensign if Miss Block takes him seriously!" I murmur.

### III

THE Cinnamons were home most of the next two weeks, and I soon discovered that Josh Twain was right. Adeline Block was displaying a great deal of interest in Cliff Ensign, although she was trying to work quietly—probably on account of her father.

Bill Pratt was wised up to what was going on, and it worried him some.

"The old man is going to raise Cain around here one of these sweltering days," the manager glooms. "He wants no ball player for a son-in-law, college or no college. From what I hear, this Miss Block is goofy over Ensign. She can't meet him at the house, but she goes out riding evenings, taking her maid along as a stall. They pick up our Cliff, and all's well—or not well, I ought to remark!"

Josh Twain told me he narrowly escaped annihilation at the clubhouse before one brawl by carelessly humming "Sweet Adeline, my Adeline."

"Somehow, I ain't positive he likes Miss Block as well as she does him," the cut-up observes. "Seems as if he hates to have anything said about her, whereas usually you can kid him and get kidded back on most subjects."

"That proves he's in love, you dumb-bell!" I squawk.

"I doubt it, Frank, I doubt it; but he never fails to meet her and the maid in the car. The maid is for chaperoning and protective purposes, I suppose—to fool the old boy. That maid is a sweet doll herself. Adeline is a good-looker, but she ain't got a thing on the hired help."

"Tell me why Ensign would go out with Miss Block if he didn't like her?" I argue.

"Well, she has a fortune, and a bright young man could do worse."

"I think you're wrong, Josh. Ensign ain't that kind of egg," I assert. "From what I'm told about this boss of ours, though, no noble athlete is ever going to get a whack at his dough."

The sausage king's daughter might have fooled her father for a short time, but Adolph Block tumbled one day. He



came booming into Cinnamon headquarters, where Bill Pratt and I were chinning with Hub Hoyle, just back from a trip in the South.

"Who is this fellow Ensign?" he howls. "You mean Clif Ensign, our right fielder," says Bill Pratt, endeavoring to be calm. "One of the best youngsters we—"

"You got to get rid of that fellow!" shouts the sausage king. "Get him off the team! My daughter is going crazy over him, and I'll have no ball players in my family—not me!"

"Get rid of him?" falters Bill, and you should have seen Hub Hoyle's face!

"Trade him off—sell him—shoot him! I don't care! But get rid of him!" commands Block.

"Mr. Block," Bill states, "Clif Ensign is a highly valuable and important member of the Cinnamons. Some day he'll be a great star."

"I don't care! He's got to go!"

"Isn't it possible, Mr. Block," I ventured, "that you could persuade your daughter to leave here for a while? That would—"

"My daughter! My Adeline! Persuade her to do nothing! She's about as stubborn as any woman knows how to be when she gets a notion. If I—well, I tried to send her away. Think she'd listen? No! So we must get that fellow away from here."

"But to trade a youngster like—" begins Bill.

"That's what I said," thunders Block; "or I'll get a manager who will do it!"

Bill gets pale.

"Supposing I do send Ensign to another team, what good will it do?" he argues. "If your daughter is deeply interested, she—"

"That's just the point!" interrupts the sausage monarch. "She takes sudden notions, and usually they don't last. This fellow is a fine dancer and a musician, and she is making an awful fuss over him now. Until some other fellow comes along and strikes her eye, it's impossible to move her; but if we separate them I think she'll soon forget this ball player. I can't send her away, so he's got to go. A couple of weeks without seeing him, and she's just as likely as not to take up with a new amusement."

I was impelled to butt in once more.

"In that case, Mr. Block," I observes, "maybe the matter can be fixed up with-

out us losing a great youngster. The team leaves to-morrow on our last long road trip, and we'll be away nearly three weeks. During the interval something may occur to change Miss Block's mind. Of course they will write to each other—"

"I can attend to the mail part of it," promises Block grimly. "Three weeks away, huh? I don't know whether that will do any good or not."

Bill Pratt and I squawked nobly, however, and had some help from Hub. We finally got the sausage millionaire to postpone his trading plans.

"Remember, though, if this keeps up when the club comes back, that young fellow goes quick," warns Block. "I'll see there ain't no letters between them, and I'll try to find something new for Adeline, but I ain't sure. She may not forget so easily this time."

After his departure Bill Pratt shook both fists in the air.

"Imagine that!" he moans. "Trade off Clif Ensign because his daughter likes the kid—oh, murder! You stalled him for a time, Frank, but if the affair is really serious the Cinnamons will suffer. Wonder if we ought to put a flea in Ensign's ear, and—"

"Not on your life!" I yodel. "That would spill the succotash right. Any time a cooky thinks he's in love, and you shove a thumb in, you're baking trouble in large loaves. Give this girl a chance to be fickle, if she's going to be!"

"So that's Block!" snarls Hub Hoyle. "His name must be an abbreviation for something. Get rid of the best young player I ever discovered! Afraid he would marry his precious child, is he? Why, I'll bet Ensign's family has it all over Block's. He's a college man, ain't he? It's a cinch his folks are all right, and I probably could prove it in no time!"

Our chief scout was terribly peeved, and we didn't blame him. Hub was still growling when he left the next day for the West to once-over some youthful chuckers.

The Cinnamons did well on the swing around the loop—so well that we came back home for a three-tussle series with the Buccaneers sitting close to the top of the heap. Could we bump off the Bucks for the whole three, we'd be closer to the Giants than cabbage is to corned beef.

Clif Ensign had played fair ball on the trip, and I noticed he didn't get much mail.

Maybe old Adolph Block was putting it over on the fair Adeline.

#### IV

THE sausage monarch was around to see us the first night of our return. Bill Pratt and yours humbly were glad to see him in a good-natured mood.

"I think it's all right," he warbles. "When you left I got Dell Durward, the swell-looking movie star, to come and use my estate for his next film. Adeline is all excited over him now. Seems to be, anyhow. She changes her mind quickly, and I had hardly any mail to keep an eye on."

"Then it won't be necessary to trade Ensign at present?" remarks Bill.

"Not unless she suddenly loses interest in the movies."

The Cinnamon manager looks joyous.

"Fine! We need all our strength in this final dash for the rag. We have a chance to beat the Giants, if we knock the Buccaneers over the next three days, and I think we will."

The boys took the opener from the visitors by slugging the onion all around the pasture, and copped the second brawl in the eleventh frame, thanks to a timely two-bagger by Josh Twain. Another win would place us a game behind the Giants, and they were coming for a series of four battles with us.

In neither game against the Buccaneers did Ensign show well. He seemed a bit off his feed.

"Worrying about the jane," Bill Pratt squawks privately to me. "That ain't so good, either. Well, if she can forget, he ought to."

Christy Walsh was on the hill for the Cinnamons in the third game, opposing Hooper, the wonderful southpaw of the Buccaneers.

Both heavers were right, and for eight cantos the plate was unthreatened. The visitors made a great bid in the first of the ninth, but a beautiful catch by Beak Parrott and some flossy flinging by Walsh gave another goose egg to the scoreboard.

Christy struck out to start the Cinnamon half of the frame. Clif Ensign was next, and he hadn't been able to touch Hooper all afternoon. Of course, he was a left-handed hitter against a port-sided pitcher, which gave the Buccaneer boxman a slight advantage.

The outfielder from Idaho fouled the first chuck. On the second he laid down a wonderful bunt along the first base line, and beat it with ease. The foxy Hooper let it roll, however, and the agate swerved an inch or two foul before it stopped. "This was tough luck."

Going back to the plate, Clif cut at the last strike and drove the apple past Hooper. Though Moran, the Buccaneer shortstop, made a wonderful grab back of second, he had no chance to nail the whizzing Ensign at first.

Tommy Langlow bunted. As he dropped the ball, Clif was streaking toward second, and he didn't stop there. He raced on to third, attempting to get two sacks on the sacrifice.

Making the put-out on Langlow, the Buccaneer first baseman heaved quickly to third. His throw was a trifle high, forcing the hot corner guardian to jump for the ball, and as the latter did so, catching the ball, Ensign came sliding for the bag, taking the enemy infielder's feet out from under him.

Flat on his back flopped the Buccaneer, and Ensign was up and off for the platter. He came for the old can like De Palma opening up on the straightaway.

The third baseman regained his pins and pegged desperately. His hurried heave bounced off the back of our young meteor—and the game was over. Clif counted the one marker necessary to win, and the Cinnamons had mopped up on the series.

Great was the rejoicing. The fans swarmed on Clif and Christy Walsh, and the discomfited athletes had a terrible time shaking off their admirers.

Bill Pratt was tickled the well-known pink over the showing of his club. At breakfast, next morning, he was laying plans to crush the Giants and push on to a world's series.

"The way Clif came through in the ninth!" the manager enthuses. "I tell you—what's this?"

"This" proved to be Mr. Adolph Block, the sausage monarch. Believe me, he was raving mad as he tore into the breakfast session.

"You wouldn't trade him, and now they've done it!" he barks. "Adeline took the maid out to go shopping this morning. Shopping, hell! She's eloping with that fellow—that Ensign!"

"Are you sure, Mr. Block?" Bill de-

serts the ham and. "I thought she had forgotten—"

"No—she was just fooling me all the time!" Block howls. "I was suspicious when she took the car this morning, and when I come to the hotel and find Ensign gone, and his roommate, too—"

"That's Christy Walsh," I mutter.

"And more than that, part of a note in his room giving it all away," snarls the sausage maker. "Read this!"

He shoved forth a scrap of a letter. I caught the lines:

—will meet you with the car, dear. You have the license, so we can go direct to that little preacher near Dovedale. All the love in the world!

The paper was initialed with the letters "A. B."

"Dovedale is fifteen miles away. You might beat them there," suggests Bill Pratt.

"I'm going to try!" squawks Block. "My big car is much faster than Adeline's. I want you fellows to come with me. I might kill that fellow if my temper gets the best of me. If you'd only traded him off, Pratt!"

The three of us dashed for the street. Right outside the hotel we collided violently with Hub Hoyle and a large, strange gentleman who seemed in a wicked humor.

"Oh, it's you, Block! I want to see you," snaps this person.

"I got no time for you, Apfelgoff, this morning!" glares the sausage king, who was evidently on no friendly terms with the other.

"You got to listen to me!" asserts the stranger, grabbing Block's arm.

"I never did like you, Apfelgoff!" hisses Block. "If you stop me now, I'll hate you the rest of your life. My daughter is eloping with a scoundrel of a ball player named Ensign, and you stop me—"

"What?" roars Apfelgoff. He wheels on Hub Hoyle. "Ensign! That's the name he plays under, ain't it? My son eloping with your daughter, you sausage making scoundrel!"

"Your son? Charlie Apfelgoff's son?" Block staggers.

"The young fool! Gets out of college and won't go into business with me, but runs away out West and becomes a ball player! Clif Ensign, nothing! He's Charlie Apfelgoff, Jr. So he's trying to

marry your daughter, Block! Not if I know it! Where are they?" is the string that breaks loose from the large friend of Hoyle's.

"Get into the car!" snarls Block. "We're wasting time. It's bad enough that my daughter should marry a ball player, but a thousand times worse if he's an Apfelgoff!"

"I didn't know you had a daughter, Block," says the other; "but if she was the last woman on earth, I wouldn't want my son to marry her. Drive on as fast as the Lord will let you!"

"What a wonderful morning this will be!" I murmur, as Bill Pratt, Hoyle, and I scramble into the rear seat.

With a jump the sausage monarch's machine is off.

"Who is this fellow, Hub? He and Block love each other like arsenic!" gasps Bill Pratt, as we smash the speed laws to bits.

"He's Ensign's father—Apfelgoff, the lard millionaire from Kansas City. He hates Block. They were in business together once, and they never got over it."

"But how came you got hold of him?" I query.

"Block got my goat three weeks ago. As if the kid wasn't good enough to marry into his family! So I made up my mind to find out who Ensign was, if I could. I traced him from Ivanhoe to college—Yale, by the way—and learned that his name was really Apfelgoff. I went to the old man in K. C., and he blew up when he heard the story. He'd been hunting for young Charlie quite a while, and the minute he heard of Block's daughter and how she figured in the affair he sped this way."

"Well, there'll soon be fireworks, boys!" forecasts Bill Pratt.

## V

THAT machine of Block's sure buzzed us to Dovedale, and we lost little time finding the "little preacher's" home. As we came to a stop in front of the place, the door opened, and Clif Ensign and Christy Walsh walked out with two girls.

"Too late! Good!" breathes Bill Pratt.

To my surprise I noticed that Miss Block was with Walsh, instead of young Ensign-Apfelgoff. The Idaho outfielder and saxophone player had his arm linked in that of a trim little thing with wonderful eyes.

The lard millionaire and the sausage monarch were out of the bus and racing toward the couples.

"Are you married, Charlie?" groans Apfelgoff.

"Why, hello, dad! Yes, I'm a benedict. This is my wife. Ada, meet—"

"You young scoundrel! I—"

Block cut him short by shouting to his daughter:

"Adeline! You ain't married to him?"

The sausage king's daughter grins.

"No, father dear. I have just been helping out, like Mr. Walsh here. There must be witnesses to any wedding."

"But—but—" splutters Block.

"The three of us have been having a little joke," Miss Adeline says sweetly. "I became interested in Mr. Ensign—I mean, Mr. Apfelgoff—when I found out that he was a splendid musician. I soon learned that he was interested in a member of my household other than myself. Then I helped all I could. Unfortunately, father, you got the idea that I was the girl in the case, and I couldn't resist the temptation to have a little fun, even up to the unnecessary elopement. You see, it was my maid he wanted, not me at all."

"I found a note with your initials!" cried the emperor of linked delicacies.

"Not mine—Ada's. Her name is Ada Brown, father—or was."

"And I am—or was—Miss Block's maid. I didn't want to marry Charlie on that account, but he insisted—so I did," confesses the new bride.

"And I love her, dad! I hope you will, too, because—" the outfielder begins.

"I don't care if she's a washerwoman as long as she ain't—well, it's all right, Charlie," mumbles the lard millionaire.

"Sure it is, now," admits Block. "Well, we can't stand in this man's yard all day."

"You come back with us, dad," advises young Charlie.

"You young rascal—changing your name and playing baseball! Maybe the baseball part of it is all right, though I think there's more money in lard; but why call yourself some foolish name like Ensign? Ain't Apfelgoff good enough?"

"Good enough for me, dad, but think of the poor fans! I guess I'll stick to Ensign on the diamond for a while. I'm going to stay with baseball, dad. Ada says it suits her."

"So what can I say?" is the last thing we hear Apfelgoff, Sr., chirp.

Both Hub Hoyle and Bill Pratt smiled most of the way back.

"Though I do wish he'd waited until after the Giant series to take the plunge," the Cinnamon manager says once.

"Never mind," comforts Hub. "I reckon the club ain't going to lose the fastest outfielder in baseball for a while yet. Everything is O. K. Block is satisfied, his daughter seems to be, Charlie is, and so is his old man. It all turns out as nice as I could wish."

"In other words, it is ending according to Hoyle," punned Bill Pratt; and considering the circumstances, we forgave him.

#### A STATESMAN

You ought to hear Bill Snyder, pard,

When he talks politics!

There ain't a problem that's too hard,

A tangle he can't fix.

He sets around the fire all day

In Dooley's store and spouts away;

And when he leaves for supper, say,

We're on to all their tricks!

The League of Nations don't stump Bill,

He's doped it out for fair;

He talks on Ireland, too, until

You wonder how they dare.

I asked him once: "Why don't you go

To Congress, Bill? This town's too slow

For you!" He said: "Why, don't you know

They don't want *statesmen* there?"

*William Wallace Whitelock*



# Invisible Wings\*

THE STORY OF A BRAVE GIRL'S UNAIDED BATTLE WITH THE  
WORLD

By Mariom Trelawney

DOREEN O'MOORE, a convent bred orphan, and her friend and schoolmate, Zoe Sand, go to live with Zoe's mother in New York. The girls find themselves in luxurious surroundings, but in an atmosphere of moral laxity; and the luxury is short-lived, for Harry Balfour, a rich mining man who has been the head of the household, nominally as an "uncle," suddenly leaves Mrs. Sand, refusing to provide for her any longer. He declares himself in love with Dory, and anxious to marry her, but the girl will not listen to him. She resolves to stand by Mrs. Sand and Zoe, even in poverty, and to find a way of earning her own living.

Among the people whom the girls have met in the very mixed set that frequented Mrs. Sand's house are Jules Blenner, a young pianist; Jack Harrington, a newspaper man; Silvia Van Twiller, an actress; and Felix Grange, a well-to-do man about town who knew Dory's mother.

## VII

IT was late when Mrs. Sand arose next morning. After bathing she made up her face, put on a charming kimono of padded white silk, and passed into her boudoir. The maid came in softly with breakfast in a pretty Dresden service. She glanced at her mistress respectfully.

"My, how haggard she looks!" the girl thought, but what she said was: "I hope *madame* rested well?"

Coffee aroused Mrs. Sand from the apathy in which she had lain all night, and she began to think. Similar scenes to that of the previous night had taken place between her pretty friends and Balfour before. She had always pretended not to know of them; but she had cleverly contrived to disgust Harry with whatever lady he admired, and to bring him to her own feet in a more groveling state than ever. He was like a docile baby elephant.

But this time two things troubled her. One was that for Bella Sand evanescent youth had ceased to exist. With horror she had seen its death just under her chin a week ago. The other was that, in spite of her attempt to reason with him as a middle-aged man making love to her daughter's friend, Harry had left the house last night in a self-righteous and almost intelligent mood.

She sighed. She must try to control her emotions, and to refrain from weeping, for she must look as well as possible. Balfour would surely telephone. She concentrated all her thoughts on this, as if mentally compelling him to do so. She must have a talk with him! She had confidence in her powers. He would apologize; they would go to the theater that night and see something which would change his thoughts.

In the meantime she must send Zoe and Doreen to the country until Harry started for Europe. Two young beauties in the house were enough to disturb such a man as Balfour. Yes, she would pack them off to the country, and then everything would proceed in the same old way.

She thought of Zoe. If she could only marry the girl off! She realized the stuff of which her daughter was made. The cautious look of the mother cat came into her eyes. A man with force enough to subjugate his wife—that would mean salvation for Zoe. Jack Harrington had force; but Jack was poor, and for Bella Sand poverty counteracted any power.

True, force often lifts men out of poverty. She doubted not that Jack Harrington might eventually be a rich man, with the proper woman at his side to help him; but in the meantime? Zoe would never be content to work with her husband. The

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child was not trained for that kind of thing, thought Mrs. Sand, with a touch of pride. Furthermore, in that position she would be unable to help her poor mother, who was now on the wane. Mrs. Sand was devoted to her daughter, and very ardently she wished for Zoe a pure and upright life—if she could get it without any sacrifice.

Unfortunate, indeed, are those people who are not willing to pay for what they want. "Something for nothing" was Mrs. Sand's religion. Much as she wanted decency, she was unwilling that her child should start in plain poverty with a man who loved her. The great human army below the well-to-do was nauseating to her, however nobly its heart may beat.

Mrs. Sand realized that there was little danger of Zoe entering that army, and she was going to be made to realize it more and more every day. She sighed from her innermost depths at the fear which haunted her—the fear that her girl would follow in her mother's footsteps.

After considering the matter studiously, she determined to ask Felix Grange, who was one of her favorite platonic friends, to find Zoe a rich husband. Then her thoughts returned to Harry Balfour.

At last the telephone bell softly sounded, and, smiling confidently, she went to answer it.

"This you, Bella? Harry talking."

"Hello, dear boy! Now don't explain anything—I think I understand. Come up and—"

"Just give me your attention, Bella. This is a serious matter."

"Why, Harry!" drawled Mrs. Sand, laughing.

"Don't interrupt!" came the dogmatic tones. "Just listen. I wrote a message to you, but I've decided that it's wiser not to send anything in writing. Can you hear quite plainly?"

"Yes—what is it?" said Mrs. Sand lightly; but she grasped the receiver so that the veins stood out cruelly on her hand, and she went very pale.

"Very well! I want to tell you that this is final—you and I are through. From this day on, as far as you are concerned, Harry Balfour is dead. No hard feelings on my part, understand; but consider me dead—that's all."

"Harry!" she cried. "Come to me! At least come here and tell me! I can't bear—"

"I will read what I wrote," came the distinct metallic voice through the phone. "Whether you listen or not is immaterial. You have spent fortunes, and I was willing that you should. Now it is over. I know you have letters written when I was soft, speaking of marriage; but there's no chance of blackmail here, as you tried in the case of young Vandemeer. You are Bella Sand—that's all I have to remind you."

"Oh, my God!" cried the woman.

The gruff voice was unrelenting.

"If you are a good sport," it went on, "which is the best you people can ever be, you won't wail, but will realize on your jewels, buy a nice little bungalow somewhere, and live peaceably for the rest of your days. Do whatever you damned well please—I don't care. I know you have collateral on which you can realize a good sum."

"Realize on what?" she cried.

"Your jewels, I said. I have spent nearly a hundred thousand dollars on them. Now no fireworks, please! When we meet again it will be in other pathways; this chapter is closed. Good-by!"

He had hung up.

A low cry of pain broke from Bella Sand. Dropping to the lounge, and dully trying to realize Balfour's exact meaning, she clasped her throat. Horrible reminiscences passed grimly through her brain. All her ugly sins marched slowly by, to the funeral dirge of her present ruin; and still more horrible were the forebodings of the future which thronged over her head like blinding clouds of smoke.

How long she remained there she never knew, but suddenly she started at the shrill voice of Mrs. Van Twiller in the hall. She wondered if Silvia could be trusted. She must talk to some one or go mad.

"Be-ella!"

Mrs. Sand, still dazed, did not answer for a moment. There was a rustle, a slight perfume. The door had opened, and Silvia Van Twiller, nodding a long green plume, peeped in coquettishly.

"My, aren't you ready, deary? Aren't you going to the morning concert at the Plaza?"

Advancing, Silvia saw the staring creature who sat rigid, like a dead woman, and she uttered a little scream.

"No acting, please, Silvia!" pleaded Bella. The blood flushed suddenly in her head, as it had often done lately when she

became excited. "No acting! Sit down quietly. Give me a drink first. I—I have just had some upsetting news!"

"My!" gasped Silvia, after her friend had gulped down the brandy. "You're pale again now. I'd better call a doctor."

"Please sit down, Silvia. You may console a very, very weary woman."

Silvia groaned imperceptibly at a thought of her own.

"This is where Bella asks me for that thousand she loaned me, and I can't possibly get it now," was what went through her head.

"Deary," she said, "if there is anything in the world I can do to help you, tell me right now."

With a rattle of her miniature jewelry shop of chains and rings, she fervently pressed the thin hand of her friend.

"It is all over, Silvia—all over!"

"You don't mean Peter—"

"Ha!" laughed Bella. "Peter! What is Peter to me, any more than the rest of them? My little band of parlor snakes—do you think they would care a darn about me, but for my good food—my background?" She waved her hand about the room. "Pull away the rose-colored luxury, and what am I? Now that is over. Harry has left me, Silvia. He's left me cold!"

"Merciful Heaven! You don't mean that, after all these years?" said Silvia. "Isn't there any settlement?"

Bella shook her head.

"Irrevocably ruined," she said.

Silvia bent forward impulsively, and with a strained, theatrical gesture enveloped Bella in her strong arms. Together they gazed out of the window, down the oblivious Fifth Avenue.

"Why should he make you suffer?" hissed Silvia. "I can't bear it!" Her eyebrows still raised in an expression of pain, she looked toward the brooding gray sky, as if she expected an applauding gallery. "Ah, my poor Bella!" she moaned.

Still no word from Bella, who presently released herself and went over to sit on the lounge. In itself, the fact of her friend's ruin meant little to Silvia, but she could think of no way of getting that thousand dollars, and she could conceive of no other motive for Bella's confiding in her. Nor could she think of any legitimate excuse for not returning the money—the price of three smart gowns. She must keep Bella off that subject in some way.

"You know, dear," said Silvia, "we all expected any day to hear that you and Harry were married."

"Yes, Silvia—that was my great hope."

"Your hope!" scoffed Silvia. "Mercy, it would be a calamity to be tied up to a thing like that forever! You are too superior a woman. There are others;" and Silvia nodded her green plume.

"No—that was my only hope," said Bella in a distant, arid voice, which seemed to come from the grave. "There will be no others, Silvia."

"Oh, pshaw!"

"When one has greedily made one's days count for twice their length," continued Bella in the same dull tone, "one is twice one's age at forty-five. I am forty-five. I know some women are in full bloom at my age, ready to meet the difficult parting of the ways—ready to meet the strange nerve-racking, the mental fever, of a journey across an abyss. They take it victoriously. Perhaps it leaves them on a new road."

Silvia sighed genuinely this time, for last month had marked her own forty-first birthday. No one knew it, of course, and she thought no one would ever suspect; but again she sighed.

"Bella is a good talker," she thought. "Always gets poetic when she's blue—does the 'sad little woman' act better than any one I ever knew. It's most depressing, but it's probably brought a large part of her success with men."

Mrs. Sand studied a pretty pastel over her head.

"See that picture, Silvia?"

"Yes, deary—why?"

"See the woman reaching from the little canoe for the water lily? It is just out of touch, like the allure an old woman tries for. There comes the day when the flower of attraction is impossible to touch. This is that tragic day for me, Silvia. I know to-day that my youth and attraction are gone—gone!"

The first tear appeared in Bella Sand's eyes, and she buried her head as the sobs shook her violently.

Some minutes passed before the storm of weeping ceased. Silvia quietly opened her vanity case, absorbed a tear which threatened to spoil her newly blackened eyelashes, pulled down her mouth, rouged it carefully, powdered her nose, and then peered earnestly into the little mirror.

"Forty-one!" she thought. "No one would think it of me. I will take good care of myself—I must never be broken like poor Bella. I will never waste my good healthy energy!"

She noiselessly closed the little vanity case and went over to the couch. She took the deeply veined hand tightly within her own.

"There, dear, you have cried long enough now, but it has made you feel better, I know."

She bathed her lace handkerchief in some perfume from an ivory and gold bottle, and placed it across Bella's eyes.

"Silvia, I want you to help me. I want to talk," began Bella. "You are here with me at the funeral of my youth."

"Now see here, dear! It's all right—this 'youth's gone' stuff; but it's nonsense, as you know."

Mrs. Sand straightened.

"Don't play to me, Silvia! The fact is that—that in old age one is forgotten. Only youth is marketable."

"Well, if you insist upon it," acquiesced her friend, "it may be true; but this poverty stuff for you doesn't go, and you know it as well as I do. You have other youth to market."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Mrs. Sand.

Silvia fixed her friend with a cold, brazen stare.

"Zoe and Dory O'Moore," she said.

"Silvia!" Mrs. Sand's lips curled in disdain. "My daughter has been beautifully educated. She will marry a rich husband in time."

"Oh, yes," responded Silvia, stiffening. "I wish you luck!"

"You don't think for a moment that I would have designs on two young girls—that I would allow my daughter—"

"To follow in the footsteps of her mother," added Silvia, affecting a very cultured tone. She threw her arm over the back of the chair, and leaned forward, facing the grief-stricken woman with her wide, brazen eyes. "Now I'm going to tell you something, Bella!"

Her voice became hoarse and tired. She was allowing herself to express what was really in her mind.

"Zoe is her mother's daughter in every way, only more so," she went on. "The girl is nineteen years old. She has her own scheme of life already doped out—the fruit

of her vacations at home. She's had affairs with different men around here from the time she was sixteen, and she has colossal vanity. In this scheme of hers holy poverty, or anything else holy, plays no part. That was all left behind in the convent—don't you forget it. Dory O'Moore is Zoe's inseparable. She may be all right—she has had no vacations—but it's a cinch that she'll soon be the same thing as your girl. Perhaps the husbands will come—perhaps not; but in the meantime you won't want for money if you'll take things as they will inevitably come to these two kids. Better make up your mind to grow old pleasantly and realize that even a mother can't grow oranges in a Maine cabbage patch. A turnip seed always grows into a turnip."

Silvia contracted her brows, bit her lip, and flung her cigarette on a little amber tray.

"Train them up not to hold themselves cheap, Bella—that's the best advice I can give you. Don't permit a lot of these hangers on like Jack Harrington and Jules Blenner."

"Please, Silvia!" Mrs. Sand, crouching against her pillow, had not the strength to answer. Indeed, she did not even attempt it. She told herself that she considered Silvia abysmally stupid and sordidly immoral—a woman who could not conceive a respectable motive in any one. There was no use expecting anything else from the poor thing.

Mrs. Sand was a curious combination. Fundamentally she was intelligent and normally good. Superficially she was selfish and abnormally bad. She gloried in getting something for nothing. After the life she had led, the woman's superficial side was of course the positive side, and came to the front at a time like this. She secretly hoped that Silvia was right; for she seemed to see Dory and Zoe throwing her the lines of riches and power, which she would grasp avidly rather than sink in the repellent sea of poverty.

Silvia glanced at her little wrist watch.

"I really must run, Bella. I forgot a lunch engagement. You've no idea what *chic* people you meet at these antisuffrage meetings. Now buck up, old girl. I wish I had this wonderful place of yours and these two beautiful girls on my hands. Catch me worrying about an old fathead like Henry!"



Mrs. Sand silenced her friend with the majesty of her glance, rose from the sofa, and went over to her.

"Silvia, I must move at the end of the month."

"But the furniture—all this beautiful furniture, deary!"

"It is to be sent to Harry. It is his, and he told me last night that he insists upon having it."

Silvia folded her arms in righteous wrath.

"The old beast! I just wouldn't give it to him!"

"You don't know Harry when he wants anything. He will have this furniture. It is in his name, and I can't prevent his taking it. He told me that I must realize on my jewels."

"Well," said Silvia, much relieved to think of this other source of income for her friend, "thank Heaven they're good for a pile that will keep you for the rest of your days. You seem to want the simple country life, and that's a consolation, dear. Perhaps it's a good thing for you just now, till you're stronger."

Bella Sand tottered.

"Oh, Silvia!" she whispered. "The jewels—I have had them all duplicated in paste—that is why I am ruined."

"Bella, you never did such a shiftless thing as that before! I never would have believed it!"

The two women sat down, holding each other's hands. Bella's brain was a hopeless blank, but Silvia's was filled with ominous fears. She, too, had duplicated all her jewels in paste. Only last week she had sold Bill's large solitaire, which he said had belonged to his mother. It had paid an extra milliner's bill. What if there should come a time when she found herself in a position of this kind?

Silvia was deeply affected now, for she was worried about herself.

"Bella," she said, "I never realized how foolish this kind of thing really is, until this moment. I—I have done the same thing. Even Bill's ring"—she held out her finger, and the stone gleamed in the dim light—"is paste."

Mrs. Sand scarcely seemed to hear. She patted Silvia's hand absently, realizing that the thousand she had loaned her friend was beyond recalling, and seeing the futility of asking for it.

"I never knew you needed money, Bella. Henry—"

"Yes, yes—Harry gave me everything. He was lavish," said Bella; "but he would draw the line at certain places, by way of discipline. 'Willful waste makes woeful want,' he would say in his bourgeois way, and that stale old aphorism always enraged me. My whims were my only god. Ah, Silvia, as I look back on my life, it has been absolutely fantastic! It all seems very long ago, very strange and unreal. I sold my jewels one by one for little excursions with my parlor snakes, for extra gowns—gowns which I did not need—for trifles—always for ephemeral things. There was a curious joy in the deception. I don't know if you can understand that, Silvia. I loved Jack Vandemeer, as you know. That period of my life was a happy one, and I thank God for it. I never deceived Jack, but he threw me over. Henry meant nothing to me. Like most men, he had faith in the power of material possessions to attract and hold women. It was a pleasure to deceive him. I never thought Bella Sand would see the day when it would all be forced down her throat, as it is now. Ugh, how ugly!"

She went over to a little inlaid cabinet, and, taking out a crystal bottle and glass, poured herself a drink.

"Join me, Silvia?"

Mrs. Van Twiller rose gradually.

"Ah, Bella!" she said. "This stuff is a curse—you know that as well as I. It is the thing that takes youth—the thing that drags one to the gutter."

Silvia towered over poor Bella Sand, with hand upraised, impersonating the demon rum.

Bella continued drinking, making a wry face after each gulp. At any other time she would have taken her cue and acted as insincerely as her friend—agreeing with her entirely, and waiting until after her departure for the drink. Now she shiftlessly responded:

"If I ever needed a drink I need it now—I have a dreadful headache!"

"It is only a momentary comfort, Bella, and I beg of you not to take it, dear. It is ruin, ruin—that's all!"

"You look pretty seedy to-day yourself, Silvia. A little drink will do you good."

This brought Mrs. Van Twiller back to herself quite suddenly.

"Well, how can I help it if I look seedy, after you've upset me so, Bella?" she whimpered. A large tear appeared, and

she let it roll demolishingly down. "After all, I'm nothing but a pauper myself!"

Giving away to her grief, and entirely forgetting her sermon, Silvia went to the cabinet and poured herself a drink, nearly filling the glass with Scotch. Then the two fading friends—Mrs. Van Twiller with her gay green feather sadly nodding, and Mrs. Sand with her rich kimono falling away at the knees and disclosing two little feet desolately turned in—sat close together for some time, crying and sipping.

### VIII

DORY opened tired eyes, and rested her head on her elbow. She still seemed to feel Balfour's obnoxious caress.

The clock had struck five before she slept. Then she had dreamed exquisite dreams—about Jules Blenner. Indeed, her mind was still warm and nebulous from them. The cold, gray light of a winter morning appeared, showing distinctly the outlines of things in a real world.

"Mercy! I should have been thinking of business," sighed the girl.

She leaned her head to one side, like a listening canary bird. There was no perceptible sound of anybody being up, yet there seemed to be a hushed atmosphere of tumult about the place.

Dory bathed quickly, feeling all her muscles contract as she awakened.

"I can't think here!"

She longed to steal out to mass. This, of course, was the habit of her girlhood. The church, with its mellow colors streaming in through Gothic windows, incense, and the tones of the organ—there she could kneel and meditate. She wanted to feel herself being carried away in the flow of spiritual thought. It was the longing for supernatural help which comes instinctively to those in trouble.

Hunger did not help Dory's mental attitude; but she feared to venture into the dining room. The little enamel bell at her bed meant nothing to the girl. She decided to stand at the door, and eventually a servant would pass along the hall.

Presently the maid knocked and entered.

"A gentleman to see Miss O'Moore," she said, extending a card on a little ivory platter.

"Mr. Jules Saxon Blenner—with a message from Felix Grange," the card read.

In terror Dory leaped upon the bed with one bound, and called Zoe.

"Oh, are you hurt? What is it?"

Then Zoe saw Jules Blenner's card. She enigmatically raised her brows with a peculiar expression.

"What a funny hour to call—half past ten in the morning!" she said.

"Yes—I know," gulped Dory. "Oh, I won't see him! I—"

Dory was clasping her hands to her heart as she spoke.

"Why, of course you will," drawled Zoe. "It's too exciting! I wish Jack would come. Miss O'Moore will receive the gentleman in the library," she told the maid.

"You know," she confided to Dory, "they don't care what hour they call, when they're in love. I have an engagement to lunch with Jack at a cute restaurant downtown. There—that's my secret! I'm pretending to go over to Ann's, so she must be in the secret, too. Dory, don't gape so, dear! If you keep him waiting too long, he'll think something is the matter."

You may be sure Dory had no desire to have things appear any worse than they were. Automatically, she took out a little coil of soft auburn hair and patted it on her cheek. Then, suddenly, she stopped, put her hand to her breast, and bent her head in a listening attitude.

"I hear my heart beating so, Zoe! Do people die of palpitation? I have it now. Jules Blenner—Jules Saxon Blenner—is that what it says?"

"My, you're fussed!" laughed Zoe. "Here's a nice flower—pin it on and hurry. I'd like to hear all about it before I start downtown."

With trembling fingers Dory pinned the dahlia on her black dress, so near her supple white throat that its color was reflected on the shining skin. Then Zoe, in high excitement, pushed her out into the hall, assuring her that she was perfectly beautiful.

On the threshold Dory hesitated for a moment. Then she caught sight of Blenner from the door of the salon. He stood looking out of the window of the little library. His black hair looked as if it had been polished, and its high lights emphasized the fine molding of his head. His blue suit fitted his slight figure perfectly, as he stood with chest in and shoulders drooping a little.

It was so peaceful and cozy in there! The library was one of those rooms that

look as if they had existed and would exist forever. Beneath the low ivory-colored mantel burned a softly crackling fire, at which Nini, the yellow Angora, sinuously warmed her soft fur. Luxuriously filled bookshelves lined the lower wall. Above them were soft brown hangings, and the comfortable chairs were covered in woven gold and black. Near the fire was a charming round table of the seventeenth century, and upon this were some fragrant yellow roses in an ancient blue jar which had once belonged to Anne of Brittany. Near the jar was an exquisitely bound volume bearing the crown and porcupine of Louis XII. Collecting rare editions and fine bindings—about which in reality he knew nothing and cared nothing—was one of Harry Balfour's pet affectations.

At the window, framed in its golden drapery, the smoke of his cigarette curling about him as he looked out into the damp grayness of the January morning, was Jules Blenner.

For some moments more Dory stood silently on the threshold, regarding the scene before her with trembling lips and brown, brooding eyes. A wave of tenderness for Jules passed over her—transfigured her. Suddenly the young man thrust his hands in his pockets impatiently and turned.

"Good morning!" said Dory hurriedly.

"Oh, good morning, Miss O'Moore! I didn't hear you coming. I say, you must think it strange my calling at this hour; but," he continued, with a charming smile, "Felix said I must deliver this message personally, and of course I was delighted. I am to tell you that he is ill—not seriously, but ill, and unable to meet you at luncheon. Mrs. Grange is at Newport, so there is no way for you to lunch at home with him."

Blenner smiled again, caressing her with a solicitous and admiring look from his gray eyes. Neither spoke for an embarrassing moment.

"Aren't you going to tell me to sit down?" he asked.

"Oh, pardon!" said Dory, in high confusion. She lifted a huge armchair and would have borne it nearer the fire; but he took it away from her. As he did so, their hands touched for a fleeting moment.

"Are you really very sorry I came, Miss O'Moore—as sorry as you look?" he asked, as they were seated at either side of the crackling wood.

Dory smiled rather foolishly.

"You smile with your lips," said Jules, as he bent toward her; "but your eyes are inexpressibly sad!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, sorry—about my expression I mean."

"Felix charged me to say that if there is anything you need, especially the thing that paupers are so munificent with—advice, I mean—you are to ask me. I am as good at advice as Felix is at practical aid. I can't afford real aid to anybody. I wish I could!"

Dory raised her eyebrows, and bent her head until her delicate nose touched the yellow dahlia.

"Thanks, so much," she responded faintly.

Blushing outrageously did not help her situation in the least.

"Felix said you were to trust me," added Jules in a singsong voice.

He imitated a shy child with an innocent little moue. Then they both burst out laughing, and suddenly all her confusion fled from Dory.

"You played so well last night!" she said. "I want to thank you for it again. It is a great pleasure to hear such beautiful playing."

"Oh, thanks! Do you mind if I smoke?" He lighted a cigarette and leaned back, still looking steadfastly at the girl. "I play especially well when I feel some sympathetic presence in the room, and I felt it last night." He leaned forward again, holding the cigarette in his muscular fingers, allowing the violet smoke to encircle his dark head. "I felt it—in you; so you see the thanks should be on my side."

Dory's lips quivered and smiled appreciation. She told him about the effect his playing had upon other people in the room, and for a while they talked of music. Dory proved to be quite *au courant*, and her intelligent appreciation charmed Blenner.

"Do you sing anything by Tschai-kowsky?" he asked.

"Yes—'À Qui Brule d'Amour,' but—"

"Please do—now—just softly! I will play it for you."

"I haven't much of a voice," said Dory. "I haven't, really!"

"I don't believe it," he replied; "but even if you have not, you would interpret like an artist—which is much more important. Come!"

Dory shook her head, and, putting out her graceful hand with a charming indolent movement, started to arrange the yellow roses in the blue bowl. Behind it was a picture of Balfour. Fear came suddenly into her eyes. Suppose he should come back to have a last scene! Suppose—

"Oh, I can't sing this morning!" she gasped. "I—I—"

Blenner noticed her quick change to pallor. Throwing his cigarette into the fire, he went over and stood near her.

"I know you have something to ask," he whispered. "If you don't wish to trust me, write it to Felix, and I will take the note at once."

"I do need advice," she whispered. "I must have it at once!"

Jules started to take the lovely, trembling hand in his, but quickly drew back, remembering that Felix had warned him:

"She is a gentlewoman, not one of the Sand crowd."

"Will you believe that you may have confidence in me?" said the young musician. There was something in his low, languid voice that was almost hypnotic. It calmed and reassured at once. "I am a stranger to you, Miss O'Moore, but if you have a woman's intuition you will understand my feelings, and"—he smiled again, inclining his head quite near her as he said softly, "and not be frightened."

"I have confidence in you. I feel you are my friend."

"You know," said Jules, "Felix is very anxious about you being here with Mrs. Sand. That's what you want to talk about, isn't it?"

Dory winced.

"You don't think Mrs. Sand is bad, do you?" she whispered.

Jules raised his eyebrows in helpless interrogation.

"Do you?" he asked.

"No, but I know the world does. I know all about it. Last night—"

Dory recounted the conversation between Balfour and herself. She imitated Balfour exactly.

"You see the point?" she continued. "This horrible old thing thinks he is too good to marry her; but he enticed her into living this way, promising always that some day he could bring himself to make her his wife. Poor dear! I feel that fate has always been against her." Dory turned her flowerlike face toward Jules. "Fate might

be dead against any of us. The flesh is weak, as the Bible says. I saw her poor, sad face and all the suffering of her tired spirit, and I want so much to help make this easy for her. But," she concluded, raising her brows, "perhaps you have no sympathy with her because the world calls her a bad woman!"

"No—I, too, am sorry for Mrs. Sand. She will miss all this luxury terribly. Balfour is a rotter!"

"And then," continued Dory, "I—I was terrified with what he said about men calling on me, and—"

Jules Blenner frowned and turned nervously in the chair.

"Sure enough, one did this morning! That's why you acted so strangely at first, I suppose." He smiled tenderly. "But you understand now?" He sighed, and lighted another cigarette. "It is an awful mess," he said. "You say you must make your own living, and must start at once. Miss O'Moore, the best way to do that is to be helped financially—but not by a man," he added quickly. "That is my first and most important advice. Promise me one thing—that you will never allow a man to help you with money, no matter how friendly he may seem. It is—"

Dory looked so strangely at him that he seemed to finish his sentence by thought transference.

"These are the things I can do," said the girl, "to make my own living. I can sew and embroider, and I can sing and play the piano fairly well. Of course I feel I could do best on the stage. I love it, and one can rise slowly, I know. My mother was on the stage. I am willing to devote my life to it!" Dory looked appealingly at him. "But you know, Mr. Blenner—you know unless one is high up on the stage one is *declassée*."

A glint of cynicism sharpened Jules's dark-lashed eyes.

"Yes, Miss O'Moore," he said. "One is as *declassée* as a cook as one is as a chorus girl—and *vice versa*. The same is true of the saleslady, the telephone operator, the factory girl—in other words, in all reasonable ways of making a poor but honest living one is constantly in danger of the 'man higher up'—who generally takes the form of a hawk. There is no preference, except that the most independent of these callings, the most lucrative and respected, is that of the cook."



The girl listened pensively with a little wan smile. She was thinking that Zoe would unquestionably go on the stage, as she had often said she wanted to, and that it would be best for them to go together. They could help and protect each other, and both could protect Mrs. Sand.

"The actual solution," Blenner's quick, staccato voice went on, "would be for some wealthy woman philanthropist to back you. Most philanthropists, these days, are sort of money lenders. They get all the credit for charity, but there is generally some stipulation that they will be paid back with interest when their protégé succeeds. So don't think it charity I am suggesting, Miss O'Moore. Some one like that might back you—say in a kindergarten, or a studio for music lessons to beginners. Or," he continued, touching the tops of his fingers together and raising his eyebrows, "you might be a private secretary to a lady; but ladies never want beautiful young private secretaries. I'm afraid there's no opening there. Now if I only had money! But I have not even made my official début yet—I just go around unknown towns giving concerts, for which my manager gets most of the cash. Nobody understands the compositions that I slave so over, and they are always refused. My dad does not believe in backing me, though he's very rich. But you are not listening to a word I say!"

"I think you were saying that I must not accept money from any man but you," laughed Dory softly.

Already the girl was being brought to realize that a man protects a woman he loves with all his might against everything in the world—except himself!

"Unfortunately I must leave to-morrow for a concert tour in the West," said Jules. He leaned forward and seemed to enwrap the girl with a soft veil of tenderness from his eyes. "I don't want to go, because of—you!"

Dory examined her flower assiduously. Both were silent while Jules lighted still another cigarette.

"How fascinating he is!" thought Dory. "How wonderfully he must affect the women of his audience!"

She remembered with a pang the musicians who used occasionally to give recitals at the seminary, the girls' wild adoration for them, and the panegyrics they could deliver on their personal charms. Musi-

cians seemed to be a race in themselves, apart. They seemed to like all this adulation, to accept it as their divine right.

Dory sighed. Perhaps it was a misfortune to love one of them; but could that be helped now?

"I shall not be gone very long," he was saying; "not any longer than I must. May I write, so that you won't forget me entirely?"

When that was settled, with few words and much meaning, Dory waved her hand to indicate the room.

"Perhaps when you come back all this will have vanished," she said. "You must promise me one thing, whatever happens—that you will never let any one say anything mean against Mrs. Sand. She has been kind and sweet to me."

"That is all you have to say—I am for her," said Jules.

"Just remember that circumstances have been against her," continued Dory. "She is brave, and will come through this misfortune like a queen. Zoe and I will help—and you and Felix may, too."

He came and stood close to her.

"You may count on me—always. People say all kinds of things about Mrs. Sand, but I believe it is not up to us mortals to judge her. She has been kind to you—that shows her goodness. I must go, now; but soon I shall return to you, for I have met some one—the language of music is necessary—who belongs to my harmony of life!" His voice dropped so low and became so soft that it was almost a caress. "Will you take very good care of that some one—for me?"

The girl started and drew back.

"I'm sorry," he said very quietly, "but I had to tell you that you have a most respectful worshiper in me. This you surely understand!"

"Why do you say that?" asked Dory. Harry Balfour's gruesome prophecy about other men rushed across her mind. "Why do you say that?"

But Jules Blenner's frank, low voice was reassuring.

"Why do you let your soul shine through your eyes?" He touched the yellow flower with his finger. "Give me this," he said, "to say that you will write to me and confide in me, and will not forget me!"

Slowly the lovely little flower was drawn forth like a golden answer. Taking the

hand that held it in both his own, he kissed the soft petals as he looked far into Dory's questioning eyes.

The girl trembled with the exquisite thrill of contact, but the next moment her blood ran cold. In the doorway stood Mrs. Sand, dressed in a white kimono falling away at the silk-stockinged, lace-beruffled knees, and Mrs. Van Twiller, grinning maudlinly, with a green feather drooping over the side of her ear. There they stood, unsuccessfully endeavoring to hold each other up.

If Dory could have seen anything save the dilapidated condition of the benefactress whom she had just championed, she would have perceived Blenner's painfully suppressed laughter at this familiar sight. He immediately went toward Mrs. Sand, however, with hand outstretched.

"How do you do, Bella?"

The lady drew herself up haughtily, at the same time drawing her hand back in a spectacular manner.

"I should think you would be ashamed to speak to—to me," she said, blinking her darkened eyelashes furiously, "after what I just saw! Jules Blenner, how dare you make love to Miss O'Moore? How dare you, I shay?"

Here Mrs. Van Twiller, apparently in a much less combative mood, interrupted:

"Oh, Bella, ish all right! No harm done—they're young!" She grinned benignly with watery eyes at the petrified Dory. "Kittens mush play," she added in a mellifluous voice. "Kittens mush play!"

Mrs. Sand swept her away with a gesture, and supported herself on the heavy curtain.

"Jules Blenner," she said, swaying a little with the curtain, "the man that lays a hand on my daughter—or my adopted daughter"—she indicated Dory solemnly, and nodded her little head ominously as she looked at Jules out of half closed eyes—"hash to answer to me!"

Straightening his shoulders, Jules spoke very quietly, attempting to subjugate her with the stern tones of his voice.

"Bella, you have misunderstood, believe me. You must think how embarrassing this is for your friend—for Miss O'Moore!"

"I want you to understand," continued Mrs. Sand, "that my children are always to be ch-chaperoned when you call. No

matter what they shay 'bout me, Jules, I shall always ch-ch-chaperon these two young ladies." Her sharp little nostrils dilated and her scant bosom rose and fell quickly. "No one will ever be able to shay a—a—snap of the finger 'bout these young ladies!"

Sinking into a chair, she looked solemnly and severely at Blenner, who, much relieved to note that the doorway was now clear, took a hasty departure, feeling it the very kindest thing to do for the sake of Dory.

## IX

A MONTH later, the scene of these lives had changed. Fate, the swift and skillful scenshifter, had cleared the stage of every trace of luxury, and Mrs. Sand and the two girls found themselves in an ugly set of screaming red-flowered wall paper, stove-pipes, and clattering dishes. They had taken refuge in a boarding house run by a sharp-eyed woman who seemed to suffer from ossification of the facial expression—a Medusa with the power of turning impecunious boarders to stone.

Friends fled like magic. They are such poor actors on a poverty stage set that perhaps it is just as well they should be scarce.

"Friends!" sighed Bella Sand one evening, as Zoe and Dory sat sewing on the shabby white iron bed. "They are people who are kind to you in order that they may get something out of you!"

But Dory leaned over and pressed her hand.

"Don't you believe I am a real friend?"

Leaning her head on an emaciated arm, Bella Sand regarded the girl.

"Yes," she answered. "You are one. One friend I have!"

"I suppose that's what makes people talk about friendship so much," remarked Zoe. "Friends are so rare, like diamonds. You're the real diamond to me, all right, Dory!"

"Of course, if Felix were able, he would help us," sighed Zoe. "But isn't it my Irish luck for him to have brain fever and be cooped up in a sanatorium just now? Heaven only knows when he'll be out."

"Poor Felix! I hope and pray he will get better soon. We have no one now—and Jules Blenner and Jack Harrington away," added Dory.

"Dear children!" said Mrs. Sand. Her blowzy eyes told too plainly the fact that

she had had recourse to alcoholic consolation. "Dear children, Felix may die; and as for those two boys, they are as poor as church mice—don't think for a minute they can help us!"

"Oh, but they would help us with—with advice and sympathy," said Dory. "We"—the proud lips curved into a smile—"Zoe and I are going to earn money to help ourselves."

The thought of this was too much for Mrs. Sand. Tears swelled up in her throat.

"I never thought I'd see the day my child would have to earn her own living," she sighed. "One disgrace after another seems to be heaped upon me—heaped upon my poor heart!"

"But it isn't a disgrace to earn your own living," responded Dory. "I think there is something noble about it. I'm only sorry I wasn't trained for it. We both like the stage, Zoe and I; but we have no training, you see, so we'll have to start from the very bottom. Perhaps we must begin in the chorus; but it will be interesting—really exciting."

"Just the same," piped up Zoe, "the first rich man I can get to marry me, you bet I'll take him right away quick!"

"Mommie's baby!" cooed the consoled mother.

It had been agreed that Dory was to go in search of a position on the stage for both girls, since Zoe didn't have the "nerve." For a month the poor girl had sought work every day. The Broadway managers told her that small parts were for novices who could live without salaries, dress like royalty, and perhaps even put their own money into the show. They asked enigmatic questions.

"Have you a backer?" was the commonest of these queries.

Finally, after weary search, the manager of the Bilbur Opera Company had found a place for Dory, because he had known her mother, and for her own beauty. He had accepted Zoe, too, and had engaged both girls for the chorus of his "show." They were to go on the road, with their stage clothes and traveling expenses paid, and salaries of sixteen dollars a week.

This delighted Dory and contented Zoe, as Dory assured her they would have lots of fun in the chorus. Dory said they would allow themselves eight dollars a week apiece, and each send eight dollars to Mrs. Sand.

At ten o'clock next morning the two girls went to their first rehearsal for "The Pirates of Penzance."

It was held in a large, long room, over a saloon on Lexington Avenue. The dirty walls had various names and remarks scratched on them. Near the three windows, which faced on a dismal street, was an upright piano, and around it were several kitchen chairs and dusty benches. At the other side, a rail protected the little staircase that led down to the saloon. The two girls leaned against this, and looked with interest at the door on the other side of the room. It was the street entrance, and it admitted many strange figures.

A tall, thin man appeared, with fair hair, very red eyelids, and large green eyes. He looked around with an air of importance and disdain. Then, jerking his limbs, he went over to the window, took off his hat, coat, collar, and waistcoat, and put them all on the piano. That was evidently his domain. He tried over many songs, nervously putting in variations and scales, and always ending with four or five flamboyant chords. He was Mr. Casey, the orchestra leader.

Then came a short young man, well proportioned and very neat. His thick, colorless hair was brushed off the side of his energetic little head. His face was pale, and he had kindly blue eyes, a nice smile, and gold-filled teeth. He wore a trim gray suit, stub-toed shoes, and a jerky red tie. Taking out a notebook, he started to turn over the pages with a hand from which the last joints of the fingers were missing, and later he called the roll. He proved to be Mr. Bradley, the stage manager.

There were thirty in the chorus—twenty women, ten men. Soon the contraltos, sopranos, tenors, and basses were sorted and seated, and began to learn their parts, while Mr. Casey, a big cigar between his teeth, pounded out their notes on the piano.

At lunch time most of them descended the rickety stairs to the saloon below and partook of a glass of beer and a sausage. As she passed through the hall, Dory peered into the back room. Shuddering a little, she took Zoe's hand and hurried out to the street.

They looked at each other in solemn silence for a moment; then Dory burst out laughing.

"I suppose we can't expect anything very fine at first," she said.

"It's the limit!" snapped Zoe.

"It's screamingly funny. Did you see the girl they called Avec Plazir? If that's not the map of Ireland on her face!"

Zoe laughed.

"It will be pretty nice when we get our sixteen plunks a week," said Dory. "I'll tell you what—we'll take some of the money that I have left, and buy our make-up boxes to-night."

"How much have you left?"

"About fifty dollars."

Dory had loaned the rest of her five hundred to Mrs. Sand.

"You'd better take my advice and hang on to the last of it," suggested Zoe, "after we buy the make-up to-night."

"All right, dear, I will. It'll be lots of fun to-night. Your mother will teach us how to make up for the stage."

"Yes," said Zoe, "if she's able—if she hasn't been doctoring up her nerves as she does so often these days."

Quick tears rushed to Dory's eyes.

"I wish Jules would come back! He'd—well, he'd give us a little encouragement, anyway."

"I wish Jack Harrington would come," sighed Zoe. "I'm just crazy about him—do you know that?"

"But you said you'd marry any one with money who asked you!"

"Oh, well!" said Zoe, as she made a willful little moue. "I certainly would; but I'd never give up Jack—don't you see?"

"Don't talk like that, Zodie dear!"

"I mean it!"

There had been two weeks of constant rehearsing—two weeks of scanty nourishment, and of discouragement at Mrs. Sand's irrational condition—her alternative gayety and whimpering. Dory looked upon it all with smiling lips, and with eyes that were perhaps a trifle sad—but eyes in which hope lived, warm and golden. She found each day's work was engrossing. All the details were absorbingly interesting, and Dory began to learn the lesson that constant occupation prevents misery from spinning her gloomy web in the human heart.

One of the "high lights," as Dory called the important events, was the appearance of the principals; and what was her amazement and delight to find that among them was Silvia Van Twiller? They foresaw at

once an amusing companionship, a link with former glory; but time proved that no principal ever observed the proper etiquette of arrogance to the chorus better than the same blond Silvia, she who had protested undying friendship for her "old pals."

When the company left for Baltimore, Mrs. Sand, heavily veiled, insisted upon going down and seeing the girls off. On perceiving her friend Bella, Silvia Van Twiller fell upon her in her spectacular way, hoping that the manager would see how dramatic she could be. Wiping away the last tear, she swore to Bella that she would look after the two "kiddies," and bade her cheer up, for better days were coming.

Mrs. Sand did not suspect in the least what her friend meant by this. Of one thing she was certain—no help would come from Silvia's purse.

## X

DRESSING room No. 69 was a wooden box about ten feet square. It smelled of grease paint, cheap perfume, and perspiration. It was lined with gaudy costumes, and its atmosphere would probably have suffocated the inmates if the ceiling had not been high.

Sitting closely together before a narrow shelf, crowded with make-up, were six girls. Each one bent forward toward a little crooked mirror, and diligently painted her face. Next the far wall sat Dory O'Moore. Two tiny curls had escaped on the back of her pretty neck, but the rest of the auburn mass was tied in a tight topknot, so that it would not be touched by grease paint.

Next to Dory sat Zoe, who had quickly acquired her associates' habit of not wearing anything over their chemises unless they were cold. Then came Pearl April, a "pony" of Semitic origin. The only thing large about Pearl was her nose. She now drew a line of white down this prominent member.

"Makes it look smaller from the front," she confided to Zoe.

Straightway Zoe drew an unnecessary line down her ridiculous little retroussé!

The fourth girl was Fanny Bliss, a respectable young widow with a good voice. When overtired, the poor woman would become homesick for her two babies, and weep bitterly. Sometimes Dory would look



at their pretty photographs, and cry with her, and Fanny would be comforted.

Then came Avec Plazir, an Irish girl whose real name was Maggie Doolin. Avec went in for pink paradise plumes, and slightly spotted second-hand velvet suits.

"Looks all right on the outside," remarked Pearl April, with her Jewish accent; "but *oi, oi*, for her own sake I hope an accident never happens to her on the street!"

At the end of the line sat Constance Perry, a tall, stout girl who exuded a fat, babylike contentment. She wore a real sealskin and quiet, well made clothes. The mystery of changing these every night for a page's suit of green wool tights was perhaps explained by her close companionship with Mr. Eliot, boss and manager.

The wooden door popped open, and Queenie, the wardrobe mistress, popped in. Her little black eyes were like two hatpins. Queenie was short and thin and wiry, and her every movement was a jerk.

"If anybody ain't got everything they need, tell me now—the bell rings in ten minutes. Miss Plazir, did you darn them tights I gave ye this morning?"

Avec Plazir turned her head with the majesty of a queen.

"Who did ye think darned them—my personal maid? The way that woman talks!" she added, to the girls, scratching her mouse-colored hair thoughtfully with one finger.

"No sass, you!" said Queenie. "The public wouldn't get much of a treat from you if you didn't sew 'em up!"

Quickly changing her tone to a mellifluous purr, the wardrobe mistress stepped over and put her arm around Dory.

"Here's somethin' for you, deary," she said, holding out a pair of pale blue silk tights.

"For me?"

"Yes, honey."

"But Zoe's—I mean Sand's—are woolen! I couldn't wear these while everybody else has horrid woolen ones!"

"We only have ten minutes," answered Queenie, and with an enigmatic smile she added: "Miss Sand 'll probably have a nice pair to-morrow!"

She went out, and presently poked her head in through the door.

"It's the manager's orders, ye're to put 'em on at once, Miss O'Moore," she told Dory.

The company had rehearsed all the previous night and until five o'clock in the morning, so poor Dory's head ached too much to solve any problem. She meekly obeyed.

In five minutes the wardrobe mistress reappeared again. Gazing at Zoe in rapture, she gasped:

"My, but you're the candy! Ain't she a pippin, Miss Perry? Let me hook you up, deary!"

Always accepting service as her divine right, Zoe permitted herself to be hooked up as she stood before the mirror and continued painting her piquant little face.

"Anything else I can do fer the two beauties of the show?" asked Queenie in the same mellifluous purr, gazing upon Dory and Zoe, with one hand on her hip and the other on the door knob.

Cries from a near-by dressing room caused her suddenly to jerk herself energetically away. Immediately after her exit tributes were paid to the wardrobe mistress such as would not bear whispering to one's closest friend in polite society—expressions which Zoe learned quickly and used profusely.

Dory was always tolerant, though often nauseated by the atmosphere of the dressing room. While she learned the picturesque slang expressions of the stage, she never arrived at the vulgarisms.

"You two chicks better be careful of that old magpie!" whispered Pearl April to Dory, nodding her head and wrinkling her Jewish nose. "Peaches like you two is specialties for Queenie!"

"Everybody on the stage, everybody on the stage!"

There was a moment of busy powder puffs and rabbits' paws, and they all passed through the narrow, dark hall, with its one gaslight like a skeleton's arm showing the way to a new life. All dressed in gay colors, they mounted the almost perpendicular shaky wooden steps and passed through another dark passageway, when lo, a blaze of lights showed beyond the semidarkness of the wings.

Soaking with perspiration, and talking in excited sibilant whispers, some scene-shifters were putting the last touches to the first act. At last everybody was on the stage—with two exceptions. The absentees were Miss O'Hara, the famous juvenile—a Jewess, who was waiting downstairs with her married daughter—and

Silvia Van Twiller. These two disliked mixing unnecessarily with the common herd.

Bulging through his slender costume and perspiring through his grease paint, Mr. Eliot, the boss and stage manager, went among his company. He already wore that far-away expression which some actors get when "in a part." He had a few words of unnecessary encouragement for George Bragdon, the fat, egotistical comedian. He had a smile and a compliment for the muscular little soubrette, and a slap on the back and a handshake for the tall, slender tenor, who was nervously clearing his throat.

Everybody looked at everybody else with sleepless, feverish eyes.

Suddenly Dory realized that upon her was concentrated all attention. She had pinned the cape of her costume across her legs. The poor girl was weak with fatigue and burning with shame.

Mr. Eliot went over to her and held out his hand. He had been the exacting taskmaster during rehearsals; now he was as tender and gentle as a woman.

"You must not do that, Miss O'Moore," he said. "They are very pretty, and are going to help so much toward our success to-night." His handclasp was frank, reassuring. "The papers to-morrow morning will say we have Dory O'Moore, the prettiest girl on the American stage. Don't frown or be shocked, child! You'll help us all to earn our living."

Dory winced; but Mr. Eliot continued in a tone she could not resent:

"They are just as important, believe me, Miss O'Moore, as the tenor's voice, or as my acting!"

With trembling fingers Dory unpinned the cape, and every one looked at the beautiful, slender legs in the silk tights with cries of delight and admiration.

"It was all right downstairs," she whispered to him through her dry throat; "but up here, with the lights, I feel as if I were in a nightmare walking down the main street with nothing on! Do you ever have dreams like that?"

Mr. Eliot smiled into her questing brown eyes.

"I'm going to give you an understudy next week," he whispered. "You must get over stage fright first."

Again he clasped her hand, and the grateful Dory felt that she would cheerfully do anything he asked.

Zoe, who had been flirting with the tenor, pranced over and flung her arm around Dory.

"We're the best-looking things in the show," she whispered. Dory gave her a tight squeeze. "My dear," confided Zoe, "the tenor is crazy about me!"

Having cleared the stage, they rang the curtain up on the first act. The company's doctor, who was incidentally the principal backer of the show, stood in the wings. As the first act unfolded, he hissed remarks to the electrician.

"Full house, but dead—dead! Gee, this is sad! George Bragdon—Lord, who said he was a funny man?"

Mr. Becker still scowled as he listened attentively to Bragdon's "big comedy lines."

"Ugh, he put that joke over and it lay there! He ought to get a job driving a hearse!"

Then came the soubrette's song.

"By jinks, she ought to empty any house!" moaned Becker, as he saw his money pouring down a chute into the sea. "Dee-liver me from these pugilist soubrettes! I wouldn't blame them for walking out on her!"

"Chorus, chorus!" whispered Mr. Bradley, the pert stage manager, waving his hand with the abbreviated fingers. "Up to you to put some ginger in it now—or we'll have to have a rehearsal after the show to-night. Ginger up now! The girl who doesn't smile gets fired. Smile!"

"Yes!" interjected Becker. "Every darned one of you smile!"

Grabbing Dory's arm, Bradley waited for the cue, then gave her a push out.

Her head reeling before the glare, she smiled and led her line down the left. Her heart palpitated wildly, and then she felt cold, but all the time she kept smiling—smiling.

Then Zoe's clammy hand met hers as the lines formed a circle, and they both regained self-possession. The audience became merely a black mass dotted with various white spots, and the glaring footlights shut them off from a listening, inert world.

Dory seemed in a dream—going through automatic motions. Mr. Eliot was singing a song, and the chorus ludicrously "kept time." Across the stage George Bragdon, the funny man, stood doing some "comical stuff" by looking cross-eyed at the pretty girls. As usual, poor George was in the

way, and when Dory led her line across stage she tripped on his protruding foot and went prone.

It was a ghastly mishap. It seemed to Dory in that hideous instant that the whole show must be hooted off, and the world must come to an end.

Without missing a note of his song, Mr. Eliot stepped over to her, picked her up gently, and petted her pretty head as he went on his way. This little human incident brought down the heretofore passive house. Mr. Eliot smiled at the audience. For the first time they were with him. He repeated his song. Again they applauded. He was recalled—once, twice. Before she knew it, Dory was being led out in front of the curtain.

There was a tear in her eye, but she smiled up at the people in the gallery and kissed her hand prettily to them. Then she tripped into the wings amidst storms of applause.

"Those beautiful legs of yours saved us!" whispered Mr. Eliot, as they descended to the dressing room together. "Who ever gave you those good-looking tights?"

"Why, the management—" Dory began.

"Ah? No—I think not!"

At this moment Silvia Van Twiller peeped out of her dressing room and gathered Dory to her ample bosom.

"You're a great kiddy," she said. "You were very sensible to accept the present of those tights."

Dory drew back.

"My head feels so funny!" Tears welled up in the shining eyes. "I don't understand. Queenie brought them in and made me put them on. She said they were mine."

Silvia stood back against her dressing table.

"My dear, those tights are what made you the hit of the evening. They were sent you by dear old Harry Balfour!"

"Oh, I didn't know! I'll take them right off! Queenie never told me—there was no card—nothing!"

"Oh, come on, don't be a silly," urged Silvia. "He's staying at my hotel. Let's all have a cozy meal together to-night! Bring Zoe, too. I'll bet real food will look good to both you kids." Silvia grasped Dory's hand. "Harry Balfour is simply nutty about you!"

Dory had one of those vacant sensations that come over people sometimes when

everything in them cries out in vain for words. She stood looking at the actress; and Silvia, as she pulled in her pink brocaded corsets, smiled and looked at Dory, and marveled that any man could go mad over such a little chit of a thing!

At last Dory heard herself saying emphatically enough:

"Miss Van Twiller, when you were a friend of Mrs. Sand's, I knew Henry Balfour, and I hate him!"

"What?" shrieked Silvia, pinning on her enormous black hat. "When I *was* a friend!" She drew herself up, fairly bursting over the corsets; but after a pant or two she resumed quietly: "Little lady, I am always a friend of Mrs. Sand's."

The outrage of Silvia's patronizing actions all flowed over Dory—her demoralizing effect upon Zoe—her ingratitude to Bella Sand. The girl's indignation burst forth hotly.

"Well, you've been no friend to Zoe and me!" she cried. "I understand what you want me to do! You've made us feel our position here, but you may not be above us very long!"

"Why, you miserable little—" Silvia began angrily.

"Everybody on the stage for the last act!" shouted the call boy. "Everybody on the stage!"

Her heart beating wildly, Dory flew toward the stairs, leaving Silvia to swear at her maid. She kissed Zoe wildly on the cheek before taking her place in line, and in her eyes was the look of the enraged mother lioness.

Still trembling with rage at the thought of Silvia's stratagem, she peered out through the wings. There, sitting in the first row, was Harry Balfour.

And there was she—the proud, pure maiden—tripping about with his tights on, of all things—tights!

Truly it was a fantastic life, this shadow life of the theater! And its unreality was half a nightmare and half a fascinating dream.

"Even when I give them back I shall have worn them," thought Dory, and shivered a little.

The opening chord of the fourth act banished everything from Dory's excited brain but the thought of success. She wanted to go out there and sing her soul's song to those people. She could do it—she could move the most adamant heart out there.

Ah, there would be a day when she would have that chance!

It would come! It must come! Then no more garret rooms without fire—no more scanty, dirty meals—no more anguishing over the wants of her loved ones!

How many radiant spirits dash their gorgeous wings against the ugly cages of poverty all the best years of their life, before recognition brings release! Still sadder are those who beat themselves to exhaustion, and, dying, leave behind them treasures of their souls which the world at last finds out and cherishes. They are like some great musician dead of starvation and buried to the strains of his own immortal funeral march.

### XI

THE first performance was over. It had proven a success. This would mean at least a month's stay in Buffalo, and everybody offered thanks.

Tired out from long rehearsals, no one lost much time in getting into street clothes. The "Dory O'Moore fall" was gossiped about in every dressing room, some whispering that it was previously arranged between the manager and the chorus girl; and many spoke of Dory's shapely figure.

Zoe pretended to be pleased, but was secretly furious, and laid Dory's little success entirely to the silk tights. Their origin Dory whispered she would tell her friend later, adding:

"And I surely won't have them to-morrow night! Oh, my!" she went on, as she hung up her plumed cap in the dressing room. "If dear old Sister Sebastian could see us now—what, Zo?"

Dropping her belt with a clank, Pearl April raised her cosmetic eyebrows.

"Aw, cut out that Sister Sabbath Day! Don't do the little convent girl stuff around here, kiddo!"

"Yes," added Avec Plazir, stopping to look up from a cold cream washing, "when Sister Sabbath Day sees the O'Moore legs in the *Police Gazette*—"

This brought cries from the surrounding dressing rooms, and there were loud calls for Queenie to go and take care of the "only pair of silk tights in the whole blooming show!"

But Queenie was very busy with a little affair of her own. Walking stealthily up the little dark passageway, the sharp-eyed wardrobe mistress came to the wooden door

marked "Stage Entrance Only." She turned its rusty bolt, swung it backward, and peered out.

There stood a few curious shopgirls, some gamins pushing each other out of the way, and six or seven Johnnies. After looking around cautiously, Queenie beckoned to the two smartest-dressed youths. One of them stepped quickly toward her.

"Who do you want to see?" whispered Queenie.

The gentleman leaned on his cane and chivalrously doffed his hat.

"You, fair lady!" he answered.

"No kiddin', now!" whispered Queenie.

"I spotted you and your friend over there in the back of the box. I seen who you had your eyes on, and I kin give you an introduce—see? Understand?"

The gentleman rubbed his index finger and thumb together significantly.

"You're on!" whispered Queenie.

"Five plunks apiece is all I ask. They're both corn feds, just off the farm; but that's up to you—see? Would you like the dark or the blond one? I thought your friend was just devourin' the blond one, the way he was lookin'!"

"Righto! The dark one for me!"

"Well," said Queenie, "her name's Dory O'Moore, and the other one is Zoe Sand. Stand on the corner down there, and I'll wander down with them in about an hour. Any story I put up 'll be to your interest to agree with. S'long!"

The door closed, and the bolt was turned.

After a little while it opened again, and various members of the company started to file out.

Just inside the door Queenie stopped Dory and her friend, and was confiding to them about the gentlemen outside who asked her to find two good-looking girls for a big Broadway production.

"I'll introduce you," she said. "They'll take you to dinner. You'd better go, 'cause them are the people can give ye big jobs—a real chance."

They started out, one on either side of the benefactress who planned to lead them down to the appointed corner. As they reached the door, what was her surprise to see her two Johnnies standing right in front of the stage entrance! Surprise was quickly supplemented by fear and indignation as one of them—it was Jules Blenner—rushed forward and grasped the hand of the delighted and surprised Dory, and the



other—Jack Harrington—offered his arm to Zoe.

"*Bon soir!*" laughed Harrington over his shoulder to Queenie, as he bowed the girls into a waiting taxi. "You are a good little business woman—but be careful you don't land in the coop some day!"

Harrington spoke to the chauffeur.

"Drive us to the Palmer," he said.

Standing with one hand on her lip and her small black eyes like two poisoned pin points, Queenie gazed after them. She could scarcely believe it.

"Two convent goils!" she said to herself. "Wouldn't that eat you?"

Whirling through the rainy streets, Dory was happy. Was she not close to no other than Jules Blenner?

True, this was against all her resolutions; for she and Zoe had promised each other that they would ignore all invitations to go out after the theater. "Midnight parties" were a bugbear to run from; but this was an exception.

When Jack Harrington returned to New York and heard all the news, he had persuaded his paper to send him to Buffalo; and Jules, who had returned from his concert tour, decided to spend all his meager profits on accompanying his friend.

"We thought we'd surprise you," said Jack. "Is it a pleasant surprise?"

For answer, Zoe flung back her little head and looked at him through half closed eyes—those small, dark, Oriental eyes curved up a little at the corners, which recalled so vividly the fascinating ones of Bella Sand.

The taxi drew up at the entrance of the Palmer. Suddenly both girls became conscious of looking shabby, and begged to be taken to some less pretentious hostelry.

"Oh, don't be so foolish!" protested Jules. "We'll have the prettiest girls in the dining room—come!"

"Pooh!" scoffed Jack. "Every man's eyes in the place will be bulging."

The next minute the four were standing laughing and talking in the lobby, while bowing waiters were relieving the men of their hats and coats.

"Oh, Jack, I'm so happy to see you again! You're a duck to have come," sighed Zoe.

Harrington's large and rather sensual mouth parted in an enigmatic smile, and he fixed his glasses on as he looked into Zoe's eager face.

"Are you, baby child? Well, I'm going to stay here the whole time the show is in Buffalo!"

In spite of Harrington's youth—he was only twenty-seven—his knowledge of women was fairly extensive; so he refrained from telling Zoe what an effort he had made to join her.

The brilliant lights made trembling, ecstatic Dory quite dizzy. The simple process of walking into the dining room, first on one foot, then on the other, seemed a herculean feat, so conscious was she of her ludicrous gray dress. Once worn by Bella Sand as a smart *princesse* frock, the curving seams which had followed the lines of its first owner's form were crooked and baggy now, and the threadbare silk hung on Dory's slender figure like a hollow mockery.

She yearned to be miraculously transformed, or swallowed up, as she caught her reflection in the mirrors. For the first time she had a really good look at her skirt, which she had shortened herself, none too successfully. She saw her cheap little gray shoes woefully turned over at the high wooden heels, and her once gorgeous black tulle hat, now rusty and frowzy. Like a queen she would have moved, if smart clothes had covered her graceful body; but these rags ignominiously cheapened her appearance. She realized it, and her little feet shuffled apologetically. Jules Blenner would be ashamed of her!

At this thought the little hand trembled, and down went the dollar umbrella, to which for some reason she had clung. Before she knew it, somebody had leaned over from a near-by table, picked up the umbrella, and, bending low his fair, fat head over a pearl-studded evening shirt, was ceremoniously presenting the large wooden handle to Dory. A low cry escaped her, for she was looking into the pale eyes of Harry Balfour.

Balfour was supping with Silvia Van Twiller. He had the wisdom not to try to force himself further on Dory, and the other members of the party did not speak to him as they passed his table.

"Silvia is in cahoots with the wardrobe mistress, I expect," declared Jack Harrington, as he went on to tell his scene with Queenie.

"It's all that vile Balfour!" cried Jules. "I'll go over and break his head!"

He darted up; but Jack restrained him.

"Of course I haven't any silk tights—only woolen ones, ugh!" Zoe whispered; "but if he'd sent them to me, I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of sending them back after I'd worn them!"

This threw a new light on the situation. Jules suggested that Jack should buy a nice silk pair for Zoe, and that he should supply a pair for Dory, which she might send back in place of the ones she had worn.

"The fathead!" concluded Jules, as he glared truculently over at Balfour's back. "I can hardly keep my hands off him!"

At this Jack Harrington dropped Zoe's hand, which he had been ardently holding under the table. He put on his black-rimmed spectacles, and, leaning across the table, looked steadily at the dogmatic Jules.

"For a person with so little dough, you certainly have a lot of crust!" he said, with an air of superior wisdom. "If you have money to buy the child a silk pair of tights, you'd better invest it in a hat for her, my boy!" Turning to Dory, he continued: "Take all you can get from that mutt Balfour. You don't have to see him, you know. Why, a girl like you could string a boob like him for a fortune! He'd be only too delighted to feel some of his bankroll going over to you!"

Dory cringed, as she did on the night of Mrs. Sand's party.

"Please don't talk about it any more! I'm sorry I spoke—it's humiliating."

"I think Miss O'Moore can get along very well without your advice, Jack. Just shut up," said Jules.

Accepting the admonishment with good nature, Jack recaptured Zoe's willing hand and remarked in a ministerial voice:

"They that have plenty shall receive more—and they that have little shall have it taken away from them!"

The waiter offered two steaming partridges on a gleaming silver platter. At a nod from Jack he retired to the side table and started to carve.

"Don't be nervous any more," pleaded Jules. "I'm here with you, and I'm not going to let any one harm you."

His eyes clung to Dory's dark, tender ones for a long moment, and their hands found each other.

The orchestra played the catchy strains of a new dance, and gay flowers filled the softly lighted room with their perfume.

The atmosphere was warm and intoxicating, and even more intoxicating was the little god of love who sat victorious at the dainty table.

## XII

FOR five weeks the company had been in Buffalo. One day Dory came home very tired after a long rehearsal. Taking off her shoes, she threw herself on the bed and for a long time lay there, thinking.

Jules wanted to marry her. She was in a small room on the top floor—an attic room with one small window. The iron bedstead was double size, and she and Zoe slept together. There was an oak combination dresser and washstand with a crooked mirror, and against the wall were their two trunks. A gay calendar of a former year was pinned on the soiled papered wall, showing a picture of a sumptuous lady emerging from her bath. A worn black pocketbook—incidentally, an empty pocketbook—and a half burned candle were on a rickety table near the bed. This was poverty!

Yet, when Jules came to the equally bare and ugly parlor downstairs, Dory was happy—inexpressibly happy. One look from his dark eyes thrilled her, and luxury became an indifferent triviality. One word from his curved lips interested her as no other man's talk, however rich or powerful he might be, could interest her. And when he kissed her the world was forgotten.

That morning she had just five cents left. Stopping at a lunch counter opposite the theater, she ordered a cup of coffee and climbed upon the high stool to enjoy her breakfast. A very thick cupful of steaming liquid was set before her by a waiter who looked like a third-rate prize fighter.

"Ooh!" cried Dory, as she looked into the cup. "Please—there's a fly in this coffee!"

The man planted his hands on his hips and glared at her.

"Well, ye got a spoon to take it out, ain't ye?"

He kept his brows elevated and batted his scarce eyelashes as he waited for an answer.

If Dory had had another five cents, she would have laughed at this typical stage tough. If she had had strength to assert her rights, she would have demanded another cup or the money back. Being penniless and exhausted, she slipped off the

stool and bolted for the door, thanking Heaven for her safe exit. Then, carefully balancing her jarred stomach, she made her way to rehearsal as best she could.

Jules and Jack had not invited them to lunch, probably for the same reason that led Dory to go without breakfast; but when the girls met in their attic room, there was that basket of fruit. The weekly remittance had been sent home to Mrs. Sand, their lodging had been paid for. Neither of the girls had a cent left, both had empty stomachs, and there on the table was a marvelous basket of ripe fruit!

"You see, it's from Balfour," said Dory, as she furtively picked off one grape.

"He's certainly a tireless swain," remarked Zoe, as she picked off two grapes.

"Of course I'll send the thing back to him," said Dory, as she tasted a raisin.

By this time Zoe was in the depths of a big, mealy banana.

"Of course," she said.

"I'm ghastly hungry!" sighed Dory. "M-m-m—this is the sweetest fig—ambrosial, my dear!" Then, as she took another: "I was beginning to have a hollow ache. I never appreciated the pangs of hunger before. They're awful!"

Without stopping to talk, Zoe handed her a banana, while eating another one herself. This proved filling—yes, satisfying; and now Dory's conscience cried out even as her stomach had before.

"I'll send the rest of it back. Gee, Zodie, we've eaten a lot of it!"

Zoe wiped her mouth.

"Send it back!" she scoffed. "You'll do nothing of the kind! Take all you can get from him—Jules hasn't any money. Jack gave you very good advice. Work Henry Balfour for all he's worth! I wish to jingo I had some one I could work; but no such luck!"

"But you know Jack would object to my actually doing it, just as Jules would. Anyway, I hate the man, and I refuse to accept anything from him. Oh, why did we eat that fruit?" Then a little gleam of humor came to her eyes. "As Jack would say, isn't nature wonderful?"

"Well," said Zoe, "Jack is very nice, but he has no money. I'm crazy about him, but it makes me sick, this poverty-stricken kind of business for a girl like me! As for you, Dory, you're a fool not to encourage Balfour. You can marry him, if you like."

Dory shivered and made a move.

"What? Ugh!"

"Well, it's a cinch mother would have married him if she could. Don't forget that Jules will always be crazy about you, Dory. It would be a wonderful combination—money and love!"

"You don't know what you're saying, Zoe! Soon we'll have had stage experience enough, and can get better jobs. Then you won't feel so bitter about things."

A few days later there came another gorgeous basket of fruit. Dory arrived in the parlor to find Jack Harrington and Zoe generously partaking of it in a carefree, childish fashion.

"Jack, do you realize that Balfour sent me that stuff?"

Jack fixed his spectacles with one of his superior gestures, and pulled her down beside him.

"Surely you're being faithful to him, kiddy?"

"You must be serious, Jack."

"I am. You're looking very pale. My, what violet shadows under the baby's big brown eyes! Have an orange—it'll do you good. Now settle down—we'll all have a nice, cozy feed, and you don't need to think about anything unpleasant."

But visualized in Dory's mind was the red, bulging forehead, the white eyebrows and pale blue eyes, the fat nose and weak, twitching mouth of Balfour as he swooped down upon her from a superior position. This time she carefully refrained from tasting the fruit.

That night there came a note from him.

MY DEAR DORY:

Did you enjoy my offering? Why not send me a line? As you know, I passed you in my car to-day. You would not bow to me, but you looked so weary I wanted to lift you right in and fly off with you.

Why not be sensible? Come to me—I'll teach you to love me. Whatever you do, don't make the mistake of marrying Jules Blenner. A man without money is bad, but a musician without the necessities of life is hell let loose. Stop all this nonsense about "a girl can face the world and earn her living." You are tired of the struggle already, if you will let yourself realize it.

Come to me—I'll make you a queen. As Mrs. Balfour you shall have every luxury, and gradually you will grow to love me for it.

Yours,

HARRY B.

Balfour could not conceive of any woman refusing such an offer. For what was the world coming to when a rich man could

not lie back and select any poor woman he deigned to desire? Had not men always bought women? The ideas this child had about a girl's facing the world and earning a living on an equality with men caused him to roll his big head around in sarcastic glee.

Upon these incidents Dory reflected as she lay upon the humble little bed. It was good to be alone. In her dream she could see the dear form of Jules—could see his dark eyes, and the charming way they had of mutely telling their love to hers.

Then she would plan a way for their future together. Very practical and wise she would be for a while; then gradually her thoughts would become nebulous and she would go back to her dream.

At last she rose and went over to the mirror.

"Miss O'Moore!" came the nasal voice of the landlady from the floor below. "Miss O'Moore, a gentleman to see you—a Mr. Blenner, he says."

Twisting a curl on her pale forehead, Dory addressed herself to the mirror.

"A regular woman marries the man she loves. I want to be what Jack calls a good sport, so I'll earn my own living, since Jules can't do it for me."

A little powder on the Greek nose, and—yes, it was the habit of the theater—a little rouge on the tender mouth.

"I'll never settle down to stagnate and live off anybody—never! Not me!"

She tripped down the stairs to a strange little tune that her heart seemed to sing:

"A real woman marries the man she loves—a real woman marries the man she loves!"

*(To be continued in the June number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

## HER HANDS

Like gold upon the day,  
Her hair shone in the noon;  
Her gown was green and gilt,  
Sunlight on meadow spilt;  
And as she went her way  
Soft sang her silken shoon.  
Soft sang her sweet voice caroling  
To mock the mating birds of spring;  
White gleamed her hands as waxen dips  
Faint touched with fire of lotus tips.

Like dew with prisms heart,  
Like dawn upon the stream,  
Her breast glowed with chill flame.  
Yet when I, yearning, came  
She drew herself apart,  
A dear, forsaking dream.  
Like dew, like dawn, she went from me  
With virgin lips of ecstasy,  
And not one finger touch gained I,  
Who knelt in soul as she passed by.

And now, remembering  
The boons I used to crave,  
I leave her singing shoon,  
Her tresses bright with noon,  
Her voice so gay with spring,  
Dim in her distant grave  
With green-gilt gown and irised bands,  
And pray her white, deep-holding hands  
Lift to my mouth a draft of bliss  
More chaste, more holy than a kiss!

*Nelle Richmond Eberhart*



# Where the Law Left Off

THE STRANGE STORY OF THE MAN FROM SAN QUENTIN AND  
THE MAN FROM THE JAVA SEA

By Frederick Moore

PASSENGERS on the meandering local train noticed something queer about the sun-browned man in the Panama hat. His gray eyes were set deeply in his rawboned face and surrounded by tiny wrinkles, though there was not sun enough to make him squint. When he took off the hat, he exposed a strip of white skin across the top of his forehead that was in startling contrast to the brown of his cheeks and chin.

The Panama hat was not really from Panama, but from somewhere in Malaysia. The wrinkles around his eyes were caused by tropical sunlight reflected upward from smooth and glittering seas. The white strip across the stranger's forehead was a turban mark, for the man was accustomed to wearing a turban.

The passengers gave him covert stares as he sat in the smoking car and gazed out of the window, feasting his eyes on the things of civilization. When there was nothing about the landscape to hold his attention, he read the advertising signs in the car as if they really interested him—proof enough to the observant ones that, although he was a white man, he was in surroundings decidedly foreign to him.

He was more than fifty years old, yet he looked lean and hard of body, his black hair was thick, and his eyes were keen. He wore a gray suit of light tussah silk without any waistcoat, and smoked a long, slender cigar with a speckled wrapper. His smooth-shaven face had an expression of geniality. Still, there was something about his appearance to indicate that he was not accustomed to making easy acquaintance with strangers.

The newsboy and the trainmen cast frequent and curious glances at the man as they passed through the car. They were quick to appraise travelers, and had had

experience in sensing odd customers, for the train was on the branch line which led to the little shed station of San Quentin Penitentiary.

They had seen many a man take his last ride in this train and say farewell to the world when he left it. They had seen other men return to the world after years spent behind prison walls. They knew detectives and secret service men by the manner in which these professional man hunters sought the rear-end seats, or twisted themselves so as to have their backs against the walls of the car.

They knew that this stranger was not a detective, for he appeared to have not the slightest concern who might be behind him. Still, the fact that he had ridden to the end of the line, and had paid his fare back to San Rafael without getting off the car, gave them a distrust of him and of his purpose in being in that part of California.

The train pulled in at the prison station. The passengers gave little attention to the place, this being the train which carried morning commuters to the ferry for San Francisco. If they looked out, they saw a boy with a bundle of newspapers under his arm and a man in a bluish kind of uniform which bulged at the hips, informing the knowing ones in the train windows that there were heavy revolvers under the man's jacket.

The stranger in the smoking car was one of those who looked out. He noticed a pale man standing under the station shed, back in a corner—a man about forty, wearing a new suit of clothes that didn't fit any too well. He seemed to shrink from the gaze of the people in the train.

The man in the uniform approached him, stuck out a hand for a perfunctory handshake, and said:

"Good-by and good luck!"

The pale man shook hands, forced a smile, and, giving a quick glance behind him, bolted for the train and mounted the steps of the smoking car. He entered by the door behind the sun-browned man, passed him, and slipped into an empty seat near the front of the car.

The conductor came and took a ticket from the pale man with polite casualness, refraining from looking at the new passenger's telltale new suit—a suit which proclaimed him, to those who rode regularly in the train, to be a convict returning to the world of free men.

The sun-browned man presently got up and went to the front of the car for a drink of water. Standing by the faucet, he took from his pocket another speckled, cheroot-like cigar, and fumbled through his pockets for a match. Finding none, he approached the convict.

"Could I bother you for a match?" asked the sun-browned man pleasantly.

The pale man gave a nervous start.

"I—I haven't any," he said, and slumped back into his seat.

"Oh, all right—I've found mine," said the smoker casually.

Sitting down in the seat ahead, he struck a match on the sole of his shoe and puffed away contentedly, looking out of the window. Before long he shifted in his seat, so as to look over his shoulder, and asked the pale man behind him:

"What are those stone buildings over on the hill?"

"It's a prison," said the pale man huskily, but he did not look out. Then, with more animation in his voice, he added: "It's San Quentin."

His face brightened a trifle, for he realized now that the man who had asked for a match was a stranger. If he did not know about the prison, he would not recognize a prison-made suit.

"Oh, yes—I can see a wall now, above the trees," said the sun-browned man. "I've never been up this way before, and this country is all new to me. To tell the truth, I've been away from civilization a long time, and things seem strange to me."

"Is there a boy on the train with cigars?" asked the pale man.

"Have one of mine," suggested the other, pulling a cigar from his pocket. "I'd have offered you one before, but as you didn't have a match I didn't suppose that you smoked."

"Thanks," said the pale man, reaching forward for the cigar. "I got a whiff of yours, and it made me want a smoke. Yes, thanks—I'll need a match."

He smoked a few minutes in silence, and then studied the cigar between his fingers with curiosity. The sun-browned man was smiling over his shoulder, as if he expected the pale man to be startled by the quality of the cigar.

"Never smoked many like that, did you?" chuckled the brown man.

"No, I don't believe I ever did. Where did it come from?"

"That's a prime Sumatra—right from where they make 'em. I'm from down that way myself—Java Sea country."

"The Java Sea!" said the pale man in a low tone, but with infinite interest. "That sounds good to me. I've always wanted to knock about in those tropical countries."

"I've got an island down there with tin mines on it," said the brown man. "I don't want any better place to live. Perhaps that's because I've done well there, and I'm fixed for all I'll ever want."

"An island!" said the convict, catching his breath quickly. "An island all to yourself! That's mighty interesting. I'd like that kind of a life. I've been thinking for some time of making a change—getting a job somewhere in some queer part of the world. Do you think there'd be any chance for a man like me down in that country?"

He tried to restrain his eagerness and to ask the question with a touch of casualness. He succeeded, so far as his voice was concerned; but his face flushed, and his eyes had a hungry gleam in them. However, the sun-browned man was gazing idly out of the window and did not observe the sudden change in the pale man's manner.

"You'd need plenty of capital," said the sun-browned man; "and it takes a couple of years to get the hang of things—the languages, and how to deal with the natives, and so on. I got a concession from the Dutch, but maybe you'd want to go into the Philippines."

"I haven't any capital," broke in the pale man. "I mean a job of some kind."

"Well, I could use a good bookkeeper on my place," said the sun-browned man.

He turned quickly and gave the man behind him a thoughtful, appraising look.

"I've kept books—in the Eastern States—in Boston," said the pale man, jerking out the words with rapidity. "I've had a lot of office experience, and I'm a first-class accountant. I've been out here—for my health—several months; but I'm all right now—just needed a rest." He was improvising his story as he went along, certain now that the man from the Java Sea had no idea that his fellow passenger had just come from the penitentiary.

"Trouble is, I'm sailing early in the morning," said the tin miner. "Probably I'd better send up to Manila and get somebody who's accustomed to the life out there."

He spoke as if the whole matter was at an end.

"I suppose so," said the pale man.

He leaned back in his seat, disappointed; but he had not given up hope that the man in the straw hat might be prevailed upon to take him away from California. The pale man had been eight years in prison, and he dreaded San Francisco. He had five dollars in his pocket and no friends. The suit upon his back marked him to the police as a former convict—and also betrayed him to other men who had been in prison, and to possible employers. This stranger from the Java Sea, who had no suspicions, and who was sailing in the morning—surely he was a heaven-sent opportunity!

"Have you any family?" asked the sun-browned man abruptly. "Wouldn't you have to straighten out a lot of things before you'd be ready to start for the other side of the world?"

"I'm absolutely foot-loose and free," said the pale man, seeing now that the other had been thinking over the possibility of hiring him. "I've been out here touring around," he went on, determined to follow up the business. "I'm a stranger in this place. I'll take a chance on suiting, if you'll take a chance on me. I'll work six months for nothing, against my expenses out. If I don't suit, you'll owe me nothing; but I know I can do the work after I get on to the ropes."

The sun-browned man pondered the matter.

"I'm a pretty good judge of character," he said with a quick glance. "You look all right to me, but I don't want to get you into something you might not like. We shall be the only white men on the place,

and only a few cargo schooners come there during the year."

"Good enough for me!" said the pale man. "I want to get away from city life. I keep to myself a lot, no matter where I am. I don't expect a tropical island to be a pleasure park. I'm a great reader, and I've got a fairly good idea of what to expect. I could get along with you, all right."

The sun-browned man smiled, as if pleased.

"I've been sizing you up," he remarked. "You're a dependable-looking man—I'll gamble on that. Not more than forty, are you?"

"Not quite that," said the pale man. "And I'm a sober, steady man."

Seeing that he had made a good impression, he strove desperately, but shrewdly, to clinch the business without delay. He rattled on about the jobs he had held during the past ten years, at the same time taking care not to represent himself as an expert at his trade, or too high-salaried. He warned the miner that it would take him some time to become familiar with things in a strange country.

When the train reached San Rafael, they got out and walked aboard the ferryboat together.

"You'd better sail with me in the morning," said the miner, taking a soiled card from his pocket.

The convict gripped the rail of the boat, swaying on his feet slightly, for his success with the stranger filled him with a sudden dizziness. He took the card and read:

#### THE GARRY MINING COMPANY, LIMITED

G. F. GARRY

Block Tin and Antimony

Singapore      Mines at Semang Island      Batavia

"You are Mr. Garry?" asked the pale man.

"That's me," said the miner. "Everybody knows me out in Eastern waters."

There was a barge on the opposite side of the ferryboat, which Garry could not see. It had a pile driver aboard. As the barge turned, the convict glimpsed for a second some lettering on the derrick boom—"The Richards Construction Company." That provided him with a name.

"I have cards in my baggage—checked it at the ferry while I took a trip out in

the country to say good-by to some friends who have a chicken ranch up that railroad we came down on. Richards is my name—William J. Richards."

He was lying easily now, knowing that he had to provide Garry with some account of himself that sounded commonplace enough to have a quality of frank honesty.

Garry mentioned his hotel, and it was decided that his new employee should call upon him there that evening. Richards concealed the fact that he had so little money, and on arrival at San Francisco he made excuses which allowed him several hours to himself before it would be time to meet Garry again.

The convict purchased the cheapest second-hand suitcase he could find, and in pawnshops he bought an old razor and other articles of a shaving kit. He had a few cards printed with his new name, representing himself as an auditor for a mythical Boston business house, which he had mentioned to Garry as a place of former employment. He also exchanged his new suit for one that had been worn, and netted a small profit on the transaction.

He provided himself with a pocket notebook, in which he wrote his new name and a Boston address. This he used to make out expense accounts for several months, showing that he had traveled widely in California. He filled out what purported to be a diary in brief form, written with various pencils, and at various angles, so that it appeared to have been jotted down on trains at different times.

He also made notations of money transmitted to him from Boston by telegraph, and copies of telegrams in which he ostensibly reported his arrival at various places and told where he was going next. He had been well schooled in such things by men who knew how to begin life anew after prison, and his own brain had the natural cunning of the wolf.

So Richards appeared at Garry's hotel that evening. They chatted for an hour or so, and the upshot of their conversation was that Richards got permission to sleep aboard the bark which was to carry them across the Pacific.

Once in the vessel, the convict was at ease. Till now there had been a chance of a disastrous meeting with somebody who might know him for what he was, and might warn Garry. And Richards thanked his lucky star for the sheer good fortune of

falling in with a man who was leaving for the other side of the world.

## II

THE two men got fairly well acquainted on the passage out. The bark was bound for Port Moresby, in British New Guinea. From there Garry and Richards caught a tramp steamer for Samarang and Batavia. She crossed the Arafura Sea, threaded her way among volcanic islands, and passed into the Flores Sea. She steamed to the south of the Paternosters, and just after daylight of a brilliant morning she raised Semang Island.

Richards stood under the bridge with Garry and watched the island grow as the steamer approached it. In time a green mountain loomed out of the sea and hung over the vessel. The sky was still shot with the lingering colors of dawn, and the smooth waters of the sea were filled with submarine gardens, seen through a surface that reflected a mother-of-pearl sky.

A bay opened, and a couple of red-topped buildings stood out clearly on the slopes. There were other buildings, too, of native construction, visible amid thick tropical foliage. There was a gentle land breeze blowing, and it carried with it the odors of a garden full of rich blossoms.

A small cutter was skimming out of the bay, making for the steamer, which flew a signal to tell the islanders that Garry was aboard. After weeks at sea, Richards could fairly smell the sweetness of the land.

"This is heavenly," he said to Garry. "It's a dream of a place!"

Garry grinned.

"I think you'll want to stay longer than six months," he said. "I'm willing to bet you'll never leave."

"It certainly looks good to me," said Richards.

He turned once more to look at the island. He saw the piles of reddish earth marking the pit heads of the diggings. Hundreds of turbaned brown men were trotting about with baskets and spades. He made out long, galleried bamboo buildings with brown thatch, and from their un-walled interiors he caught the silver gleam of blocks of new tin piled in rows.

"Those workings on the hillside are bigger than they look from here," said Garry, pointing to the pit heads. "Underground there are old drifts and tunnels that were worked years ago by the Dutch."



"You've got a whopping lot of people here," said Richards, watching the groups moving about on land.

A throng of natives were swarming down to the little pier up in the bay. There were a few small proas along the shore, with Malays fishing from them. Up in the valley which opened from the bay Richards glimpsed some of the basketlike buildings of the native workers.

Garry smiled in amusement at Richards's surprise over the number of people.

"For every man you see above ground," he said, "there are probably ten men in the workings under the surface. And that valley running back into the hills—it's filled with kampongs—native villages. I didn't bring you to any desert island, you see."

"Must be a lot of pretty girls here," said Richards, with a glance and a grin that were full of sly significance.

Garry did not hear him, for the miner had waved his hand to the native crew of the cutter, directing them to come alongside the ladder lowered over the steamer's side. He moved aft, beckoning Richards to follow him.

Their baggage was lowered into the dancing craft below, there was a farewell to the skipper of the tramp and his mates, and Garry led the way aboard the cutter. She pushed off, the sail went up, and they went skimming into the bay, close-hauled on the land breeze.

To Richards it was like a flight into Paradise. Besides, he was leaving behind him a world that holds many terrors for the man who has been a felon. He filled his lungs with the soft, richly scented air, and looked over the stern of the cutter.

The tramp, light and down by the head, was thrashing the water behind her into a white spume as she bore away from the island. She showed a streak of dull red along the water line of her hull, bright blue on her funnel bands, while over her hung the black inverted cone of her smoke as it rose lazily and was scattered in the currents of the upper air.

When the cutter ran alongside the pier there was a great chattering among the assembled natives. A throng of turbaned men in breechcloths crowded the pier. There were yellow-brown fellows from Java and the neighboring islands, tawny Malays with betel-reddened lips, solemn Klings, and here and there a few Sikhs. These last

were whiskered and heavily turbaned, and carried small clubs, being watchmen who performed the duties of police.

They were all smiling and happy to see Garry return. Richards could not understand what the natives called out, but he could see that Garry was exceedingly popular with his workers.

As the two white men walked up the pier, they were met on land by lines of chattering women with naked children on their hips. Some young girls, in brilliant sarongs and wearing gorgeous blossoms in their sleek black hair, chanted a song of welcome and threw flowers in the path of the white men.

They went up the hill to a white house with a red roof. Richards remained outside on the flower-embowered veranda, sitting in a hammock under a punkah, and feasting his eyes on the green land and pearly sea, while Garry talked inside with native servants. Bare feet pattered over the floors, and women came down the trail from the valley bearing fruits and baskets on their heads.

A native girl came out with a pitcher full of a cool fruit-flavored liquid. She made a salaam and offered a glass of the drink to Richards. He saw at once, by the blossoms in her hair, that she was one of the girls who had sung a chant on the beach.

She was not more than fifteen years old. She wore a sleeveless jacket of pale blue, open in front, and about her middle was a sarong of red and white stripes. Richards noted the light brown of her skin, her rounded arms, her soft black eyes. Though a child, she was yet a woman, but shy as a jungle deer with the strange white man.

Garry was in fine mood all that day, and the next. He was happy to be back among his natives, and he spent most of his time away from the house, leaving Richards to loaf or read alone. When Richards protested that he wanted to begin learning his duties, Garry made excuses.

"Better get accustomed to the climate, and learn to feel at home, before you get mixed up with the accounts," he said. "I want to have a good look around myself. You won't find this a case of grubbing away every day. One day is as good as another—and you'll work by spurts. The cargo schooners only come in for tin, with our supplies, every three or four months. You'll have weeks when you won't do anything at all."

Richards was satisfied. He reveled in the luxury of his new life. They lived like kings, in a cool, breeze-swept house that was open on all sides. Richards had a comfortable room to himself, with a bed that was screened against insects. His only grievance was that Garry kept so much to himself.

### III

WHEN he had been there more than a week, Richards came to understand that Garry intended to keep aloof. The convict had taken it for granted, on the way out from San Francisco, that on the island they would be comrades; and he was nettled at being left alone so much. Garry never had his meals with Richards, and, except for an occasional game of cards late in the afternoon, Richards saw little of him.

The girl who had brought Richards the glass of fruit drink on the first day appeared at the house frequently. She was the daughter of the woman who had charge of the servants, but she did not live in the house. Her name was Si-Kiche—"Little One." Richards saw her when she came down the valley trail with fruit, and watched her as she returned home in the cool of the day.

One morning Richards attempted to talk with her. She had lost much of her shyness now, and he was picking up a few words of the native language. Si-Kiche gave him the names of various things about the room, as she pointed them out, and laughed merrily at his efforts to pronounce the words. This went on for half an hour or more.

As she was about to go, Richards suddenly grasped her and drew her to him. There was a cry from the girl, and her mother came running from the little hut behind the house, where the cooking was done. Si-Kiche, screaming, fled from Richards to her mother, who took the frightened girl in her arms.

To the amazement of Richards, Garry appeared in the doorway of an adjoining room. He wore a sleeveless shirt, and there was fury in his face as he stood looking at Si-Kiche and her mother, and listening to what the girl was saying. Richards had supposed that Garry was out of the house and somewhere down near the docks.

Garry spoke quietly to Si-Kiche's mother, and she turned to lead her daughter

out of the house. As she went, she threw back her head and screamed something at Richards, which he could not understand, other than that she had delivered a tirade against him.

"What's all the fuss about, anyway?" he asked. "There was nothing to make a row about, I tell you! I don't know what the old woman is driving at."

"Well, I do!" snapped Garry, through clenched teeth.

"It was all in play!" cried Richards, alarmed at Garry's show of anger.

"Play! Do you call it play when you maul a girl?"

"Will you take the word of a brown girl against—"

"None of that!" warned Garry. "I know these people. You can't crawl out of it that way!"

Richards turned his eyes away from the miner. He thought he saw something in Garry's rage that was more than the mere interest of a white man in a native servant—a brown girl, at that.

"Mr. Garry," he began, "I suppose I've put my foot into it. I might have known that she came here for a better reason than to help her mother with the work."

Garry snorted, and stepped toward Richards; but the miner controlled himself.

"I want to get right down to cases on what you just said," he began, with forced calmness. "Out with it! What do you mean?"

"I'd rather not say," said Richards, moving sidewise toward the door which led to the veranda. He could hear Si-Kiche wailing out in the cook hut, and her mother's voice comforting her. "I don't want to make the argument personal. It's none of my business, anyway—and I made a mistake."

"Wait a minute!" commanded Garry. "What you've got to say you can say in the open. You made it personal with me. What did you mean about the girl coming here for something else besides helping her mother?"

Richards threw back his head with a show of defiance.

"I meant," he began slowly, "that I didn't know that the girl was anything to you."

"She isn't," said Garry. "No more and no less than any other girl on the island. Get that into your head!"

"I think that the less said about this

matter—this girl—the better,” said Richards, and there was an implied threat in the words.

“And I think there’ll be enough said about the matter to have things perfectly clear between you and me. What are you hinting at?”

Richards looked at him, wondering how far it would be safe to go; but he felt that Garry was bluffing. He misconstrued the miner’s steadiness as an indignation that would probably simmer away under a direct accusation.

“We don’t need to quarrel over this girl,” said Richards. “I don’t want to trespass on your preserves.”

Garry’s fists clenched.

“Go outside!” he commanded.

“I didn’t know—” protested Richards.

“There’s a lot you don’t know,” snapped Garry. “Get out of my sight, now. I’ll have something to say about this later.”

Richards slipped through the lattice door and dropped into a seat on the veranda. He bent his head and ran his fingers through his hair, trying to think how to mollify Garry. He was in a panic of fear that his employer was done with him—that he would be pitched off the island in the first schooner that came for tin. That would be bad enough, but he had a lurking fear of what the man might do before a schooner came. Evidently this trifling affair with Si-Kiche was serious in Garry’s eyes, though Richards could not understand why.

Before long Si-Kiche went up the valley trail. Presently Garry appeared, wearing his hat and coat. He did not look at Richards, but strode away to the end of the veranda to go down toward the works.

“Mr. Garry!” Richards called after him.

Garry stopped, but did not turn his head. Richards saw that from under the miner’s coat there were visible the tips of revolver holsters.

“Well?” he asked sharply.

“I’d like to fix this thing up,” said Richards.

Garry turned slowly and looked at Richards witheringly.

“You have a job on your hands,” remarked the miner. “I think you’ll find that girls in the jungle are better protected than they are in civilized countries!”

Richards opened his mouth in amazement, as if he intended to speak, and his

face took on the same unhealthy pallor that had marked him on the morning he left the prison. His eyes were fastened on Garry, a questioning look in them. He drew back from the end of the veranda a couple of steps.

“I—I meant it only in fun, Mr. Garry,” he expostulated.

“Fun!” raged Garry. “I doubt if you’ll find it funny, when the word of what you’ve done is passed among my people. That cave-man stuff doesn’t go down here. It’s only in civilization that you can pull that. These savages, as you call them, look after their women better than white men.”

“But what I’ve heard about the South Seas—”

“You’ve heard about places where the white man has degraded the natives,” said Garry. “We haven’t reached that state of affairs here. Women are still too valuable to be pawed over. Don’t fool yourself on that score!”

Garry walked away, leaving Richards staring after him and wondering at his hint of trouble to come with the natives.

#### IV

GARRY did not return for lunch. A new servant brought food out on the veranda and put it before Richards. This was a sign that the mother of Si-Kiche would not serve him. He was disquieted by this fact, and worried by the many native visitors to the hut behind the house. He could hear angry voices in excited discussions. Brown men constantly came and went throughout the afternoon.

Garry did not appear for dinner, and night dropped down upon the island. Soon there was a brilliant moonlight over the jungle, and in the black shadows under the trees the fireflies swooped, etching curved lines of transient luminosity against the dark background of tropical glades.

Richards heard a whistle down near the pit heads. It startled him. Then he heard Garry’s voice calling:

“Oh, Richards! Richards! Can you hear?”

“Yes,” shouted Richards. “What do you want?”

“Come down here! Follow the trail past the smelters!”

“All right,” answered Richards, and set out.

He felt relieved. The fact that Garry

wanted him indicated, he thought, that the miner's bad temper had disappeared during the day, or that whatever lingering anger he might hold was of little importance.

Richards took the narrow road that led past the pit heads of the mines. He thought Garry might be in some of the sun shelters of thatch in that direction, judging his location by his calls.

Up in the valley there were sounds of rude music. Only some Sikh watchmen were about the mines, keeping the crucibles of the smelters hot with coconut fiber, and watching the glimmering fires.

Richards heard a group of natives coming up the winding path, and soon he saw their forms in the moonlight. They stopped when they were not twenty feet from him, and talked in low tones.

"Tuan Richards!" he called out, thinking they were in doubt about who he was.

At the sound of his voice they moved toward him—to pass, he thought; but the group separated, one part going to his left, and the other to his right. Then, in a sudden rush, they all fell upon him, and bore him to the ground.

He cried out wildly for Garry, but his mouth was stopped with a jute bag. He heard nothing from Garry. The natives lifted him and carried him into one of the sun shelters. He struggled to free himself, but his feet were held by a tight loop of rattan, and his hands were bound by a narrow strip of cloth.

Some oil lamps were lit—halves of coconut shells with oil in them, and rags for wicks. Richards saw about him a dozen brown men, clad in breechcloths and turbans. They cut his clothes from his body, and, bringing an old kerosene tin full of liquid, they set about smearing him with a dark mixture which turned his skin brown. They applied it with sponges, and in a few minutes he was covered from head to foot. It got into his eyes and burned them, it got into his mouth and puckered his lips, it smarted in his nostrils. It smelled like nutgall, such as is used in ink.

Richards managed to cry out several times during the process of the staining, hoping that the Sikh watchmen would help him, or that Garry would interfere; but he saw that the Sikhs standing only a few feet away gave no sign that they saw what was going on, or heard his cries.

A breechcloth was tied about his middle in the native fashion, and he was borne up

on the shoulders of the men. They started up the valley trail with him. He was in terror now, and understood that the natives had not finished with him. Before they had gone far they turned off the path toward a big bamboo hut, which showed through its basketlike sides a flickering light within.

Before he was taken inside, Richards made one more desperate effort to call Garry to his rescue, but his cries were smothered, and the next minute he found himself inside the hut. He was thrown to his feet, and the rattan lashing was taken off. His hands were unbound, and the natives stood away from him, but did not leave the hut.

Richards turned and looked at them, not yet recovered from his terror, and wondering what the next move would be. The natives formed a semicircle near the door of the hut, and scowled upon him in the light of the oil lamps on the floor. He saw that he was a prisoner.

A lattice door off to the right, hidden in the shadows, swung open—and Garry entered. Richards gave a cry of relief and held out his hands, but Garry showed no surprise at seeing the former convict all but naked and transformed into a brown man. In fact, Richards saw at once that Garry was amazingly calm about it all, and inclined to be amused. He stopped within the circle of light and looked Richards up and down with a critical eye.

"Garry! What's this outrage? Look at what these devils have done! Stripped me and painted—"

"Sure!" said Garry. "They've turned you into a native."

"And do you think it's a joke?" yelled Richards, as he looked down upon himself and held out his browned arms. "Are you going to stand for this? Did you bring me here to see me humiliated—dragged about and blackened by these savages? I won't—"

"Stop!" said Garry, lifting his hand. "These people have a serious grievance against you; and I'm the boss of this island, so they look to me for protection and justice. What has been done to you tonight has been done with my sanction—and you brought it upon yourself."

"You mean that brown girl?" demanded Richards.

"The idea of respect for a native girl seems to be beyond your comprehension,"



said Garry. "Very well, the natives intend to teach you something about their ideas of morality, and to show you how well they guard their women. I shall not interfere."

"Then I'll make you jump for it!" cried Richards. "I'll see what the law—"

"Law!" snapped Garry. "Your kind always turns to the law! It's funny that you never think of the law till you've broken it!"

"Have I got to submit to this outrage just because I took hold of a native girl?" blustered Richards. "There must be some protection for me, some law—"

"The Dutch leave the administration of this island to me," interrupted Garry. "When you talk of the law here, you are talking of me."

"Then what are you going to do?" demanded Richards.

He was beginning to suspect that this business of the natives, and the staining of his skin, had not yet come to an end. There was in Garry's manner and voice an alarming hostility.

"I have some questions I want to ask you," said Garry.

"Questions you want to ask!" exclaimed Richards. "What about?"

It flashed through his brain that Garry had been informed about the prison. The thought gave him a sudden feeling of illness, but he braced himself for a shock.

# V

"DIDN'T you keep the books of a private school near San Francisco some years ago?" asked Garry quietly.

Richards knew then that disaster had fallen upon him. The question showed that Garry knew something of his past life. A spasm twisted his face for a minute, and then he spoke, a much subdued man.

"Yes, I did," he admitted. "Somebody must have knocked me to you in San Francisco, before we sailed. I'm glad you've brought the matter up, because now I can set things right about that. What nasty kind of a story did you hear?"

"I heard a good deal," said Garry. "I wouldn't mention it, but I want to hear what you've got to say—not that what you say will make much difference to me."

"You've waited a long time to ask me," complained Richards. "I'd have been glad to talk about it before we sailed, where I could have proved what I said."

He felt that if Garry knew about the prison, he was taking it too calmly to be much concerned; but Richards wondered how much more Garry had heard, and what was the source of his information. The former convict forced himself into coolness, intent upon learning how much Garry knew, and then lying as circumstances allowed.

"Ever hear of a girl named Gaylord—Margaret Gaylord?" asked Garry.

Richards did not move; he did not change his expression, but held Garry's eyes with his own. He knew now that he was in for a desperate game of wits, because Garry was revealing matters which Richards had supposed to be buried on the other side of the world.

"Yes, I knew Margaret Gaylord," said Richards. "I—I married her. She was killed in an accident."

He volunteered the additional information in an effort to be frank, or to give the appearance of frankness.

"Where did you meet Margaret Gaylord?" continued Garry.

"She was going to that private school—a girls' school."

"That agrees with what I heard—yes," said Garry. "And you married her, and a couple of years later—"

"A year," corrected Richards.

"Oh, yes, that's so—a year later the accident happened. I'm a little hazy on time. But what happened after that?"

"What happened?" asked Richards. "What do you mean?"

"Where did you go—what did you do—after the accident?" pressed Garry.

"I didn't leave California," said Richards, evading a direct answer, for he had no intention of admitting anything till he was sure that Garry knew the whole story.

"Didn't the police find out something about the accident?"

"There was an investigation—yes, if that's what you mean," confessed Richards. "But have we got to talk about this matter here before a lot of natives? I'm willing to tell you all about it if you'll—"

"They don't understand what we're saying," said Garry. "This place is all right. I heard that the police found that your wife was not killed in an accident."

"That's all wrong!" cried Richards. "I proved that it was all wrong! She was killed in an accident, and I've been cleared of all suspicion on that terrible charge!"

"It took a long time to clear you, it seems to me," said Garry. "More than eight years—and those eight years you spent in prison, as I got the story. Weren't you tried for murder?"

Richards bowed his head and stared at the floor. He knew now that the whole ghastly story was in Garry's possession.

"And weren't you sent up for life?" insisted Garry.

"Yes, I was," said Richards, looking up. "My conviction was a mistake," he went on doggedly. "The fact that I got out—was pardoned—proves that it was a mistake. It was the insurance company that tried to get me. My wife was insured, and the insurance company framed things on me, to make the accident look like something I'd planned. You ought to be satisfied, if the State of California turned me loose."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Garry. "I brought you to this island, and a white man has to live up to his color down here. There's no middle ground—you're either a lord or a pariah. You've got in bad with the natives. That's why they've changed the color of your hide, and I don't feel that I ought to interfere with them."

"But what are they going to do?" asked Richards. "Are you going to let them carry on like this with me, just because I've been in prison—just because I touched a native servant?"

Garry laughed, but without mirth.

"You don't seem to understand just what's happened to you yet," he said.

"What do you mean by that?" gasped Richards. "If you think I'm going to stay on this island and submit to this—"

"Then you'd like to go, would you?" asked Garry. "On the schooner that comes next month, say?"

He grinned at the harassed man standing before him.

"I'll quit the place as soon as I can!" cried Richards. "And I'll make you jump—"

"Wait!" cautioned Garry. "You think you've fooled me, but you haven't—about your time in prison, and the death of your wife. I know you killed her. She wrote a letter before she was killed, saying that she was afraid of you."

"A letter!" exclaimed Richards in amazement. "How do you know that?"

Garry reached into the pocket of his white coat and pulled something from it.

The next instant he grasped Richards by his naked browned arm and dragged him toward the oil lamps. Then the miner swung Richards about so he would face away from the light, and thrust before his eyes the photograph of a young woman.

"Margaret!" cried Richards.

Then, with swift understanding of something terrible in Garry's eyes, the convict screamed the high-pitched scream of a coward. He covered his face with his hands, and stood trembling, while the natives grinned.

"Surprised to see that picture down here, eh?" said Garry, speaking through his teeth.

"Where did you get it?" moaned Richards. "What devilish trick is this to play on me? Where did you get it?"

"From San Francisco," said Garry.

"Before we sailed?"

"No, I've had that picture a long time," said Garry. "Margaret Gaylord was my sister."

Richards uttered a gurgling cry and collapsed on the floor of the hut. He twisted his body about, moaning, as if in agony. He knew now that when he talked with the affable stranger that morning in the train, just after leaving the prison at San Quentin, he had walked straight into a trap!

Garry reached down and pulled Richards to a sitting posture.

"I went halfway around the world to get you," said Garry. "I did what I could to protect my sister, sending her to a private school, while I was working and prospecting in Australia. I made the deal for this island about the time you married her, but I was sailing about in the South Seas, and her letter didn't reach me for a long time. I was planning to bring her here for a while with me, but there were gorillas on this island in those days. What I overlooked was that there were gorillas far more dangerous in civilization—gorilla men like you, damn your hide!"

"Don't kill me!" whined Richards. "I've served my time, and I—"

"You lie!" snapped Garry. "You were sentenced for life, but you fought for your freedom with Margaret's money—and mine. There wasn't anybody to fight for her, when she was dead. It was a long time before I got all the details, but by that time you'd worked up a lot of sympathy, and got out on good behavior. Good behavior! After killing a woman—your

wife—who trusted you till she saw that you were planning something against her! She wrote me that she was leaving you, and the next morning she was dead.”

“What are you going to do with me?” whined Richards.

“Poor Margaret is under the ground,” said the miner, “and good behavior can’t bring *her* back to life. Well, I’m going to put *you* under the ground!”

“Murder!” screamed Richards. “Do you mean murder?”

“Oh, no. I didn’t wait for you to come out of prison merely for murder; but I’m stepping in where the law of civilization left off with you. Now we’ll see what—”

“You tricked me!” yelled Richards, leaping to his feet. “Your name isn’t Garry—you’re Tom Gaylord! If I’d only known—if I’d only thought—”

He broke off and looked wildly about him, seeking some avenue of escape from the hut; but the natives had closed in about him. He gave a wail of despair.

“Sure I fooled you,” said Gaylord. “I had those cards printed in San Francisco—just as you had some printed. Do you think you’re the only man with brains enough to turn a trick?”

He began to speak in the native tongue to one of the men who had brought Richards to the hut—an old Malay. Richards listened to the words, and though he could not understand them, he shivered. When Gaylord had finished, the Malay bowed in satisfied assent.

“I’ve engineered the whole thing,” resumed Gaylord. “I gave you a chance to

get in bad with the natives—with the girl—and now they’re glad to carry out my orders with you. They think it’s being done on their account, but you and I know the reason for it all.”

“Are you going to let them torture me?” cried Richards. “Will you turn a white man over to these—”

“You’re a brown man now,” retorted Gaylord grimly. “Only the natives will know that you once were white!”

“You mean that I can’t take this stain off? What are they going to do?”

The natives seized him, and he dropped to his knees, pleading desperately with the miner not to give him up to them.

“Get on your feet!” commanded Gaylord. “They have their orders. You’ll go down into the mines and work—and you won’t come up till you come feet first!”

“You merciless hound!” screamed Richards. “I’m glad your sister is dead! I’m glad I killed her!”

“You talk of mercy!” sneered Gaylord. “You who could kill a helpless woman!”

He waved his hand to the old Malay. Richards was dragged from the hut and hustled up the path to the pit heads. Gaylord stood in the door and watched as the former convict was tied and dropped into the rattan sling. Then there was a creaking of the cables, and the sling dropped.

Once more the gorgeous night was still, except for the faint tinkle of music from the valley kampongs. Gaylord walked slowly up the hill in the moonlight to his house, a solitary white man with bowed head, ruling his little island empire.

#### NOW THAT SHE IS GONE

Oh, never laugh again!  
Laughter is dead,  
Deep hiding in her grave—  
A sacred thing.

Oh, never laugh again!  
Never take hands and run  
Through the wild streets,  
Or sing  
Glad in the sun;  
For she, the immortal sweetness of all sweets,  
Took laughter with her  
When she went away  
With sleep.

Oh, never laugh again!  
Ours but to weep—  
Ours but to pray!

*Richard Leigh*

# Gayly the Troubadour

THE EXCITING ADVENTURES OF BILLY BENNETT, THE YOUTHFUL CAVALIER OF PELHAM HOUSE

By Gertrude Pahlow

THE Pelham House mail, brought from the post office by the dusky but reliable Henry in a feudal-looking bag with a padlock, and distributed under the benignant censorship of the house master's gold-rimmed spectacles, contained a large, heavy white envelope for Spike Kellogg's pigeonhole. Spike's roommate, Billy Bennett, gathered it up with his own mail as he ran in for the five-minute interval between periods. He found Spike—whom the providential illness of his Latin master had blessed with a cut—lying on his back in the window seat, engaged in the scholarly pursuit of blowing paper pellets at a fly on the ceiling.

"Here's a weddin' invite for you," remarked Billy, delivering the letter with a neat shot that dislodged the pea shooter and glanced off the end of his friend's nose.

"Thank you, darling," said Spike, gathering in the missile without disturbing his repose. "Some society favorite I am, ain't I? Second wedding this term. I'm sorry you're not a social success like me, Bib. Hand you this one if you say so."

"Huh!" snorted Billy. "Keep it. Nothing but a sting for a present!"

"I should worry—dad pays the bills," said Spike tranquilly.

As he spoke, he unfolded the inclosure of the inner envelope, emitted a yell, and brought his long legs down from their vertical position with a bang.

"Oh, aunty!" he shouted. "You don't want this scrap of paper, hey? Not if it's a bid to the prom at St. Elizabeth's? Oh, no, not you! You're all for the simple, intellectual life, ain't you?"

"Mother - of - pearl!" exclaimed Billy, round-eyed. "The prom at Lizzie's! Oh, you lucky stiff! You happy prune! How do you get that way?"

"Maybe you've got one coming," suggested Spike, touched by the genuineness of his friend's envy. "You know a dame there, don't you?"

"You bet I do—Eleanor Reeves. She's some queen, too; but I haven't a chance—not a smell. She has to invite her cousin from Yale, the big fat lobster. Her mother said so, because she visited his mother last summer. You'll see her, and maybe dance with her—and you'll have a perfectly good dame of your own flattening her nose against the window for you, too. Gosh! Some guys have all the luck!"

Billy kicked morosely at the treasures of learning with which the floor was strewn.

"It is tough cheese," commiserated Spike. "I know just how you feel, Bib, old man. I had to stick around here half Christmas vacation to work off marks, and when I saw all the other guys piling into the taxis, I thought I'd cash right in. Well, now I've got to mosey to the phone and put it to the old folks at home how urgently they need my society about the 20th. Mater'll come across; she always does. Chowder! There goes the bell."

"French, too," said Billy gloomily. "Seems as if everything rotten soaks you at the same time!"

He dug his "Elementary French" from the welter of wisdom at his feet, and followed his roommate down the stairs to the winter-sodden campus.

His spirits did not lighten on entering the classroom. It was a cruel stroke of fate that he should be taking beginners' French at all. How manifestly absurd for a mature man—nearly seventeen—to be sitting in temporary equality with squeaky-voiced second-formers! How lamentable that the discovery of a gap in his college equipment should have driven him to it!



Billy hated the whole business. He had small sympathy with the subtleties of French pronunciation, which he regarded as puerile concerns for a voice as deep and settled as his. The vagaries of irregular verbs annoyed without intriguing him; and the situation of his aunt's shoes, with which the grammar persistently concerned itself, left him completely cold.

He sat in his seat, regarding the master who imparted all this useless information with an unsympathetic eye. Mr. Holmes was hardly middle-aged. Indeed, there were some who might almost call him youngish. He had been out of college a scant two years, and was in point of fact exactly twenty-five. His voice was barely a tone deeper than Billy's own. He had played football for his college, and had followed his country's colors overseas, which gave a doubly unnatural—indeed, a sinister—aspect to his apparent willingness to sit in a classroom and twist his tongue around French u's. Billy could see with half an eye that he was actuated by a hostile feeling toward boys in general, and by a peculiar malignity toward himself in particular.

To-day, in pursuance of his customary policy of persecution, Mr. Holmes called on Billy as soon as he had finished taking the attendance.

"Bennett, what's the meaning of '*Je me flatte*'?" he inquired.

Billy hesitated. He had intended to glance at the day's lesson—which was on reflexive verbs—during the interval between the last period and this, but the more important affair of the dance at St. Elizabeth's School had distracted him. However, common sense came to his aid.

"I am flat," he answered, after a pause.

"Ah! And what is the meaning of '*Je m'aime*'?"

Billy hesitated again, but not for long.

"I am maimed," he said.

"Oh, exactly! And what's the meaning of '*Je pense à toi*'?"

It seemed unnecessary to hesitate now, he was doing so nicely. Really, French was easier than he had thought.

"I tore my pants!" Billy exclaimed in a tone of triumph.

A general giggle hailed this masterpiece, especially on the part of that insufferable little smart Aleck, Perkins, in front of him. The shrillness of it was an added insult to Billy's manhood.

"Did you indeed?" said Mr. Holmes, with his chill, malevolent irony. "I should say, rather, that you spilled your beans. I think we'll have to trouble you to go to afternoon detention, Bennett. The severe architecture of Room X might act as a check on your imagination before it gets a hot box."

## II

It was consistent with the battering-ram policy of fate that when, torn from even such solace as a bruised spirit might derive from human intercourse, Billy parted from his friend at the prison door that afternoon, Spike beamingly contributed the information that his family had given their sanction to his projected journey of joy.

"I'm sure sorry for you, old kid," said Spike altruistically. "I'll tell you all about it when I come back."

"Oh, heck!" muttered Billy from the abyss of despair. "Fat lot of good that'll do me! I doubt if I ever see you again, anyway. Either you'll elope, or old Holmes-Sweet-Holmes will bust my crust with the French grammar, or I'll choke myself on a reflexive verb and get out o' my misery. Life's all over for me, old sox!"

On the morrow, however, hope, the well-known eternal upspringer, reassembled her courage and performed again her accustomed gymnastics in the distressed youth's breast. There was a dance at St. Elizabeth's, other youths were going, and what man has done man can do.

To be sure, there were obstacles. Billy had not been invited, he had no permission from home to leave school, and he had no money for traveling; but what a deterioration in the bright lexicon of youth if that craven word "fail" should worm its way into the latest edition! Humanity is moving forward, not back, as any optimist can tell you.

He and Spike canvassed the possibilities with great earnestness.

"Of course," said Spike, "you can't get to the prom unless you've got a bid. They're strict as whalebone at Lizzie's. If President Harding, or even Jack Dempsey, was to go there and try to dance without an invite, they'd throw him out so fast he'd be hot with the friction!"

"Maybe I could get a job as a waiter."

"Not a chance! Guys have tried that before. If Miss Mathison was to catch

you at it, she'd peel the skin right off you before you could squeal. She's the blood-thirstiest school-teacher you ever saw. She eats everybody alive, except parents."

"P'r'aps," suggested Billy hopefully, "I could get in as Eleanor's father."

"Fat chance!" snorted Spike, with derision. "Son would be more like it!"

"I've shaved six months longer'n you have," retorted Billy, with dignity. "Eleanor doesn't *look* old, if she is eighteen."

"Well, you don't look as if you fought in the Civil War yourself. If you can't dope out a better hunch than that, it's the dear old fireside for yours!"

"Couldn't you walk in ahead of me and slip me your ticket after you got by?" asked Billy, after anxious thought.

"Nope; they don't do it like that. Every guy hands in his visiting-card at the door, and if they don't find your name on their list they hook you. It's no use crabbing another guy's card, either, because when he sees you there he'll fire you out."

"Tell you what," exclaimed Billy, with sudden inspiration. "I'll go as your valet. I s'pose I won't get all the way to the dance, but I can hang around the hall, and you can send Eleanor out. It'll be better'n staying here with Sweet Holmes, anyway. I'd make a peach of a valet, Spike; I'm right there with all the high-life dope."

"You said it!" agreed Spike, with enthusiasm. "That's a swell hunch! You can get by with that, sure as shooting; and when the girls see me breezing in with a valet holding up my train, they'll think I'm the Queen of Sheba, Jr. You sure loosed a larynxful that time, boy!"

This suggestion so authoritatively approved, the schemer, with improved spirits, ordered a set of visiting cards, inscribed "Mr. William Ingersoll Bennett, valet to Mr. Richard Kellogg," at the printing office of the school paper. Then he turned his attention to the matter of permission.

This was a knotty problem. Absences during term-time were not encouraged by the authorities, who cherished a fantastic notion that their charges were sent to school for the pursuit of learning, and had better pursue it while the pursuing was good. Journeys to New York for miscellaneous social purposes were viewed with a special lack of enthusiasm. Written authorization from a parent or guardian was a prerequisite even to the discussion of such

a question; and as Billy's parents lived in Chicago, and moreover were victims of the same unnatural delusion as the faculty, there was no hope in them.

"Some guys write letters to themselves and sign their parents' names," suggested Spike tentatively.

Billy flushed slightly.

"I wouldn't do that," he said. "That's crooked."

"I didn't think you would, and I didn't want you to," said Spike. "I only thought, as long as you're in my service, it's up to me to give the once-over to all the methods. Some fellows have to go to the dentist's, or the oculist's."

"I can't work that. The old man's got my teeth and lamp certificates, that I brought back at the beginning of term, salted down in his cold-storage vault."

"Well, haven't you any uncles or aunts in the wicked city that are pining to see you?"

"Not a darned one. I never had anybody in New York but one grandmother, and she died before I was born."

"Too bad! She'd have been just the cheese. I say"—Spike's back was stiffened to erectness by a galvanizing thought—"why wouldn't she do now?"

"How d'you mean, do now? She hasn't done a thing but play a harp for twenty years."

"All the more reason why she should get busy when you need her! Look here, Bib, that dear old lady must have been just about broken-hearted when she croaked without ever having a chance to do anything for you. There's nothing so tender as a grandmother's love. Let her have a little pleasure for once, poor old girl. Let her invite you to the city!"

"Oh, peaches!" cried Billy, seizing the drift of the inspiration. "You've got a head like a pin, Spiky!" But an afterthought gave him pause. "I'd do almost anything to oblige a lady," he reflected, "but I'd hate to get juggled for forgery!"

"Forgery, nothing! How can you forge a person's name that ain't there? Your dear grandmother is gone to a better land. Her hand writes no more, but her spirit hovers lovingly over you still, and she wants to dictate a letter urging you to come to New York. You don't have to sign any name. Just indicate the tender relationship, and leave the burden of proof on whoever wants to prove it. Here's a pen—hop to it!"

With much labor and many suggestions from his new employer, Billy succeeded in producing a veraciously misleading document in a fairly ladylike hand.

MY DEAR BOY:

It is so long since I have seen you that it seems to me almost as if I had never seen you at all. I really cannot wait until Easter vacation for you to come to New York. Won't you come next Friday, the 20th, and spend the night? This is the only thing I have ever asked of you. I am getting old—you know I was born in 1841—and I may never see you again. Don't disappoint your loving

GRANDMA.

"That's great!" pronounced Spike. "The sob stuff will make a big hit with old Blink; and it's all true, too. Keep looking down, and tremble your voice a little if you can. That always gets him."

Billy descended to the house master's study with a lagging step. He did not relish this part of the business; and yet it must be admitted that Mr. Wilkins's guilelessness was a perpetual temptation even to the most upright of his lambs. He accepted such unblushing impositions with such unblinking blandness that it became a matter of principle to see how far one could go.

"Good morning, Bennett," said Mr. Wilkins, looking up benignly over his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Good morning, Mr. Wilkins. Here's a letter I'd like to show you, sir."

Mr. Wilkins took the letter and blinked at it benevolently.

"Ah, from your grandmother!" he said. "You are fortunate to have a grandmother, Bennett. Mine died when I was hardly half your age, but I remember her well. H-m! Yours seems fond of you."

"She—she hasn't seen much of me, sir."

"It's a weakness that sometimes survives considerable acquaintance, with grandmothers. I see she wants you to visit her. How do you feel about that?"

Billy drew a long breath. This was the crucial moment.

"Of course I know I'm not very high in my work, sir; but I wouldn't miss any more than I can help, and I haven't been away this term. I'd hate to disappoint her, Mr. Wilkins. You see, sir, she—she's all the grandmother I've got."

He cast down his eyes, as Spike had directed, and trepidation did make his voice waver a little. Mr. Wilkins looked moved.

"Well, Bennett, that sentiment does

you credit," he said; "and under such circumstances I can't be too severe. Get back in time for your French the next morning, and we'll call it satisfactory."

Billy thanked him in a mumble, and joined Spike, who had been waiting breathless in the corridor, with an untriumphant mien.

"Gee, it was too easy!" he said heavily. "He just lapped it up. Makes me feel awful cheap. I'd sell myself two for a cent."

"Oh, take a broader view," consoled Spike. "The old man just loves to do a kind deed, and if nobody ever gave him a chance, how could he? By helping him to oblige dear old grandma, you've made him happier for the whole day."

Heartened by this altruistic view, Billy's spirits began to rise again, and kept rising steadily. He held a private auction of personal effects to secure funds for the journey, borrowed a fancy waistcoat from one sympathetic housemate, and a pair of dove-colored spats from another, got his travel permit signed by the headmaster, and began to swagger as confidently as Spike himself.

He did not even suffer a pang when, in French class, Mr. Holmes said with that cold scorn of his:

"Bennett, you know a lot of French. How do you translate '*Le bois est coupé et parti*'?"

"The boy goes to the party in a coupé," he answered blithely, without a moment's hesitation.

### III

CLAD in an assortment of the dressiest raiment that Pelham House afforded, and followed by the envious good wishes of all their schoolfellows, the voyagers set forth on the afternoon of the momentous 20th. Billy had been due in afternoon detention for French; but since keeping the appointment would have meant missing the train, he felt that he was compelled to forego it. His last memory of school was the baleful glint of Mr. Holmes's eye as it caught his through the window of the departing taxi. This haunted him until they reached the station.

"That stiff looked at me as if he wanted my dome to crack nuts with," he confided to Spike, with some bitterness. "I believe he's nosed it out about grandma. It would be like his low, sniffy French way!"

Getting on the train, leaving the cares of school life behind, and setting forth upon a great adventure, banished painful thoughts. When they had finished dinner with Spike's parents and arrived at the exclusive portals of St. Elizabeth's, Billy was high-keyed with anticipation.

First came the ordeal of passing the vestibule. Their cards were taken by the neat maid who opened the door, and were handed by her to an elderly dragon in eyeglasses. This formidable guardian devoured the names with a fierce glance, compared them with a list in her hand, and indicated by a bow and a hostile pseudo-smile that they were recognized. Spike's passed her censorship without question; but at "Mr. Williamson Ingersoll Bennett, valet to Mr. Richard Kellogg," she raised a pair of cynical eyebrows.

"It is not customary for our guests to bring personal attendants," she objected.

"No, I suppose not, Miss Mathison," said Spike winningly; "but in my case it's necessary. I'm not very strong, you see, and—and my mother likes to have some one around to look after me. I have to have help to get my coat off. I injured my arm playing football last fall—injured it very badly."

"Indeed!" said Miss Mathison, in a most unsympathetic tone.

"Yes, indeed," answered Spike eagerly; "and Bennett is a very good servant. I really couldn't get along without him. He even stays with me at school—don't you, Bennett?"

"Yes, m' lud," murmured Billy, who had been striving for a week to attain the highest level of stage aristocratic tradition.

Miss Mathison surveyed the valet with a piercing glance.

"Of course," she said to Spike, "you would not expect this person to linger around the premises here after he has discharged his duties. That would be quite unnecessary."

Billy gave his employer a furtive but violent prod.

"Oh, yes," said Spike hastily. "I can't let Bennett go. I'm subject to—to a sort of fits—fainting fits, you know—and I have to have him within reach. I simply have to, Miss Mathison. His duties are never done, as you might say."

He smiled ingratiatingly, meanwhile administering a surreptitious kick to his valet in return for the prod.

Miss Mathison reflected for a moment.

"Very well," she said to Billy, without enthusiasm. "You may take a seat in the hall after Mr. Kellogg goes in. Of course you will keep entirely away from the ball-room, and speak to no one except in the pursuit of your—er—calling."

"Yes, m' luddy," mumbled Billy thickly.

Devoutly thankful to have passed the ogre with whole skins, the pair of adventurers moved on with haste, and found themselves in the hall. This was an oblong, from which opened the drawing-rooms on one side and a small cloakroom and two unspecified domestic doors on the other, and into which debouched a wide staircase. From the closed drawing-room doors issued the preliminary scrapings of the orchestra, and from the stairhead suppressed whispers and giggles indicated that the girls were waiting the word to descend.

Another neat maid came forward to take their coats, and Billy, agitated by his exciting surroundings and the strain of the recent interview, was about to yield his up unthinking, when a punch from his companion restrained him.

"What you doing?" demanded Spike in a fierce whisper. "Want to gum the whole game, you hum?"

Recalled to his professional poise, Billy made a violent effort.

"Your coat, m' lud," he said coldly. "Your scarf, m' lud. Your lid—I mean your hat, m' lud." As an audible murmur of amazement and awe from above showed that the scene was appreciated, he was inspired to increased assurance. "Give me a bresh, me good gal," he said to the maid, in an accent compounded about equally of Billy Primrose and Robert Mantell. "I see a speck of dust on his ludship's collar."

"Thanks, me good man," said his lordship, rising magnificently to this lead. "Tell the gal to put me togs in a safe place."

"Yes, m' lud. 'Ave you a clean 'an'kerchief, m' lud?"

"I am fully equipped," said his employer haughtily. "Don't forget your place, Bennett."

"Why, it's Bib Bennett!" exclaimed a suppressed but audible voice above the stairs.

"There's Eleanor!" whispered Billy excitedly. "Don't forget you're going to give me your dance with her!"

"I shall leave you, now," remarked



Spike aloud, with malice. "I hope you won't have too dull an evening, Bennett, me good man."

"If you don't bring her out here, you saltine, I'll bust your crust afterward!" muttered Billy.

The last of the fortunate youths, nervously fingering the collars of their new dress coats, passed inside the enchanted door. The girls, with many excited giggles, descended by a rear stairway, and the dance music began. Even Miss Mathison, with a final Gorgon stare through her unfriendly glasses, departed to cast her blight on other innocent pleasure seekers.

Billy, alone except for the neutral presence of the cross-eyed cloakroom maid, forgot his professionally stony demeanor, leaned back in his chair, and gave himself up to vainglorious musing. How many dragons had he slain to attain this goal? Nothing could withstand him when he once set his will for achievement. There was not a single obstacle now to complete success but the flimsy one of the drawing-room door. Behind it the girls were already murmuring of his daring; and through it, obedient to his summons, Eleanor Reeves would soon come forth in all her fairness to crown his prowess with reverent praise.

As he sat thus pleasantly gloating, the street door opened again to admit a belated guest. Billy turned to glance through the open door of the vestibule; and horror chased away his exultation, and left him frozen. It was none other than Mr. Holmes.

For full half a minute Billy sat staring helplessly. Then the staccato step of Miss Mathison, coming to welcome the late arrival, startled him into tardy prudence, and he resumed his valetish bearing. There was despair in his soul. His minutes within those coveted precincts, instead of stretching forward triumphantly, were ignominiously numbered.

However, though he sat braced for immediate ejection, nothing happened. Miss Mathison took Mr. Holmes's card, murmured, "Oh, yes—Miss Gibson's guest," added with manifest insincerity that she was glad to see him, and waved him on to the hall. He stood beside Billy—near enough to have scalped that agitated valet with his pocket knife—and surrendered his coat to the cross-eyed maid. Then, while Billy held his breath for the

inevitable words of doom, he turned away, crossed the hall to the drawing-room door, and closed it behind him.

Miss Mathison followed a minute later, cast her withering glance on Billy—who sat staring straight in front of him, his hands gripping his knees like a statue of Rameses I—and disappeared within the door in her turn. Billy was left alone again.

"Well, the execution's only delayed," thought Billy gloomily. "He's gone to tell the head man-eater, and she'll come and crunch me herself. Curses on him! I might have known he'd track me. He always did look at me as if I was a worm and he was an early bird. I've half a mind to beat it before he can get back. That would sting him!"

He was debating the proposed flight, torn between desire to frustrate his enemy and reluctance to abandon his last hope of seeing his fair one, when hasty steps made themselves heard in the corridor back of the stairs. He jumped, determined on instant departure; but even as he grabbed for his hat—which he had, in his character of valet, kept on the chair beside him—a well and tenderly remembered voice came in a cautious undertone from behind the stairs.

"Bib! Oh, Bib! You aren't going without speaking to me, are you?"

Billy's prudence evaporated like water on a hot stove. Jumping up, he sprang toward the voice. In the recess under the stairs, by the telephone stand, he found Eleanor Reeves, rosy and bewitching in a pink tulle frock.

"Listen, Bib!" she said breathlessly. "We're not allowed to sit out dances except there in the rooms, and we're not allowed to come into the hall at all. Spike's a perfect angel—he's sitting out with one of the chaperons to give me this chance. If Miss Mathison catches us, I'm done for; but if she comes, I'll be telephoning, and you must hop back where you were, and not know me. *What* a lark for you to come as a valet! All the girls are crazy about it; but promise me you'll watch that end of the hall every minute, while I watch this. I can't have Mattie catch me!"

Billy promised, and meant it. He had no desire to feed the dragon's maw with his own tender flesh; but he adored Eleanor Reeves with a deathless passion—which had already endured two months, and gave

every guarantee of lasting until Easter—and in the enchantment of her presence his prudence kept but a drowsy vigil. They were in full tide of the most fascinating conversation when, without any recognized warning of preliminary footsteps, a tall, thin shadow fell on that part of the floor which it was Billy's duty to watch.

Billy stood stark and stiff with panic when he saw it, his mind a complete blank. Visions of his happy childhood touched him fleetingly, but never a thought that bore on the present emergency.

Eleanor, however, was more alert. Correctly interpreting the horror on his face, she seized the telephone receiver, holding the hook down with her finger, and was absorbed in conversation by the time Miss Mathison reached them.

"What is this?" demanded Miss Mathison, glaring from one to the other.

"It's Mr. Kellogg's valet," answered Eleanor politely. "Excuse me, please, Miss Mathison—I'm answering the phone. Yes, Mrs. Kellogg, Richard's valet is here; I called him for you. Do you want to speak with him?"

"Ask if you can't take the message," said Billy hoarsely.

He had no such aplomb as Eleanor's; he feared to take this crucial moment into his trembling hands.

Eleanor listened intently.

"She wants to know if you gave Mr. Kellogg his aromatic spirits of ammonia before he began to dance," she reported.

She was beginning to enjoy herself.

"Tell her, please, ma'am—I mean miss," said Billy, terror lending his bearing all the stiffness that the best of valets could aspire to, "I attended to everything."

"He says he's attended to everything, Mrs. Kellogg. I hope you won't worry. He seems like a trustworthy person." She paused, as if listening. Then her eyes lighted with a mischievous glint. "Mrs. Kellogg wants to know if Mr. Kellogg has a clean handkerchief?" she added.

"Tell her I asked him that, and he got sore," answered Billy rashly.

"He says that he—" began Eleanor to the telephone.

"That will do, Eleanor," said Miss Mathison crisply. "You may hang up. Mrs. Kellogg's anxiety cannot be very severe if it extends to such details. Go back to the ballroom, Eleanor. As to you, sir, you may be all that you say, but I have

my doubts about you. There is a gentleman here who is a master in Mr. Kellogg's school. I intend to bring him face to face with you and ask his opinion."

Billy collapsed inwardly. Enter Holmes, the avenger; exit the pretended valet in a fog of contumely and disgrace. He answered Eleanor's laughing backward glance with a dark look of despair.

It took Miss Mathison just two minutes to keep her word. Mr. Holmes, treading close on her heels, stood before the culprit with that well-known malevolent gaze, and Billy bowed his head for the expected humiliation. All was over now. He could only hope that Eleanor wasn't anywhere within earshot.

But once again the lightning delayed to strike. There was a moment's pause; then Miss Mathison's sharp voice smote his ear again.

"Perhaps you did not understand me, Mr. Holmes. This young man has come here representing himself as Mr. Kellogg's valet; but his appearance and manner of speech give me cause to doubt him. He claims, or Mr. Kellogg claims, that he is in attendance on Mr. Kellogg at boarding school, and I am confronting him with you to test the truth of this assertion. Please look at him carefully, and tell me if you have ever seen him before."

There was a brief pause; then Mr. Holmes's voice answered:

"Yes, Miss Mathison, I've seen him often—at school."

"In what capacity?" inquired Miss Mathison.

"Looking after Kellogg," answered Mr. Holmes without hesitation. "Looking after him well, I should say."

"Does Mr. Kellogg require this attendance?" demanded Miss Mathison.

"From what I hear of him, I think he does," replied Mr. Holmes. "I believe this man Bennett is very faithful to him. I believe, in his line, he is worthy of your confidence."

There was a longer pause; and even the tense and breathless Billy could feel that it was a bitter one for Miss Mathison. At last she broke it by saying:

"Very well; you may remain," to Billy; and beside her tone the glacial rigor of her first welcome was torrid.

"I hope you're having a pleasant evening, Bennett," said Mr. Holmes, with a sort of twinkle in his voice.

Behind Miss Mathison, Billy could see one-third of Eleanor's face laughing at him through a crack of the door.

"I sure am, Mr. Holmes!" he said with a gulp.

Billy was a minute late to French class in the morning. So was Mr. Holmes—his

taxi having raced that of Spike and Billy from the station. According to that malevolent custom of his, the master called on Billy first.

"Bennett, how do you translate '*Le maître a une pêche*'?" he inquired.

"The master is a peach!" answered Billy; and his eyes shone with sincerity.

## The Buddha Twins

### THE CLEVER STRATEGY OF FOO CHAN WO, DEALER IN ORIENTAL CURIOS

By Lemuel L. De Bra

**F**OO CHAN WO smacked his lips over the last morsel of his morning rice, and with much grunting and wheezing arose from the table. From a shelf above it he took his street cap of black Shantung silk, which he set on his head with dignified precision.

At the door he turned to his two wives; and although his voice was severe, his eyes were kind.

"Where is my thousand of gold?"

"Honorable husband," replied the principal wife, "when I told Foo San, as was my duty, she ran to her room and wept, as was her duty."

"Tell her," rumbled Foo Chan Wo, and his voice throbbed with love and sorrow—"tell her that many tears cannot change that which is changeless. I shall not need her in the store until the hour before mid-day rice. *Ho hang la!*"

Muttering to himself in Cantonese, the old curio dealer moved ponderously down the narrow stairs to his store. When he had taken down the shutters from the windows that faced Grant Avenue, the main thoroughfare of San Francisco's Chinese quarter, he sat down at his desk; but instead of picking up his long-stemmed pipe, as was his custom, he opened a drawer and got out a narrow strip of crimson paper, a camel's-hair brush, and a small jar of Celestial Fragrance ink. Slowly, and with much facial contortion, Foo Chan Wo began writing.

From top to bottom, the strip had been filled with queer black characters when the merchant laid down his brush and went out to the front of the store. He pasted the crimson strip on a panel between one window and the door; then he reentered the store and sat down at his desk.

"*Aih!*" rumbled Foo, picking up his pipe. "I shall eat well when this is over; for although I have made a friend of Ah Fong, whom I need, I have made an enemy of Louie Chang, whom I fear. The great Confucius was right—women and weddings are nuisances!"

#### II

SHORTLY before the hour of midday rice, Ah Fong paused before the curio store. With his slant eyes a gleam he read the characters on the crimson strip, which told what Ah Fong already knew—that the daughter of Foo Chan Wo had been betrothed to him that day. Then, with unhurried step, Ah Fong entered the store.

He was tall for a Chinese, and his garb of dull black Canton crape hung about his bony form like emblems of mourning. At sight of him, little Foo San dropped the specimens of Foochow lacquer ware she had been examining, and fled upstairs.

Ah Fong watched the girl until she disappeared; then he turned to Foo Chan Wo and spoke sharply.

"She lacks courtesy!" he complained.

"So?" Foo rumbled in his pipe. "Then

how fortunate that she is to wed one who will set such a perfect example!"

"I shall teach her manners, sure enough!" cried Ah Fong, stung by old Foo's thrust. "But listen—I came to discuss matters of greater moment. Have you heard aught of Louie Chang?"

"I have not," replied Foo, looking up quickly.

Ah Fong moved nearer to Foo's desk, and lowered his voice.

"As you know, Louie Chang and I are sharp competitors in the secret business of selling the forbidden white drug. He has often threatened to do away with me by whispering into the ears of the foreign devil officials. I have often thought of doing the same to him; but Chang holds the tiger's paw over me. I know not where he keeps his secret supply of the drug, while he knows that I keep mine hidden in my home, for that is the only place I have. I can do nothing to Chang, therefore, because I can give the officials no definite information; but Chang could make me much trouble. He will undoubtedly do so as soon as he learns that you have betrothed your daughter to me."

Foo Chan Wo nodded, but kept silence.

"So," went on Ah Fong, with unpleasant emphasis, "I am going to bring my supply here and conceal it in your store until some time after the wedding. That will fool both Louie Chang and the officials. You do not object, of course?"

Old Foo Chan Wo frowned heavily.

"You know very well, Ah Fong, how I feel about that disgraceful business. Haven't you many times tried to entangle me in the forbidden traffic? *Aih*, I am poor, else I would never have betrothed my thousand of gold to you; but by the seven-faced god I am not going to dishonor my family name!"

"I was thinking," Ah Fong coolly continued, "that perhaps you would accommodate me when you reflected how considerate I have been regarding the sum owing me for so long—"

"Isn't it enough that you have taken my daughter? Must I also put my honor into—"

"And after deducting the sum agreed upon as the marriage price," proceeded Ah Fong, with chilling precision, "there is still quite a sum due me, which—"

"Which I cannot pay now, but will some time."

"Of course, you have the store—"

Foo Chan Wo drew away from the younger man as if he had been struck a sharp blow in the face.

Ah Fong's slant eyes narrowed, and he showed his teeth in a malevolent grin.

"To-night," he whispered. "To-night, at the second hour after midnight, I shall bring it here, and you will be ready. *Ho hang la!*"

The old curio dealer made no response. For a long time he sat at his desk, his great shoulders hunched, his head bowed, his lips puffing furiously on his long-stemmed pipe.

### III

MOVING silently on his padded slippers, Louie Chang selected a stool of old ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and sat down by Foo Chan Wo's desk. With deft fingers he fitted a cigarette in his carved ivory holder, and over the flaming match his bronze eyes surveyed old Foo covertly.

"So, honorable Foo," he said in silken tones, "your daughter is betrothed to Ah Fong, and I can eat salt, eh?"

"It could not be helped, Louie Chang," said Foo apologetically. "I have long been indebted to Ah Fong and could pay in no other way; so now it is settled."

"Settled?"

Chang widened his long black eyes with sinister emphasis. Foo Chan Wo, trembling inwardly, ventured a nod.

Chang took a deep inhalation. Then, the smoke billowing from his mouth and nostrils, he spoke in tones that carried a thinly veiled threat.

"I am surprised that you and Ah Fong dared to do it. Ah Fong is a jackal and a coward. He knows I have been seeking an excuse to—"

Chang drew a long-nailed forefinger across his bare throat in a gesture that made old Foo shudder.

Watching the other warily, Foo Chan Wo laid aside his bamboo pipe and, from the rack, selected one of heavy argentan. Louie Chang saw the move, and for an instant an amused gleam shone in his bronze eyes. Then, slowly, the lids drew down like curtains.

"How is business?" inquired Chang suddenly.

"Very poor," complained Foo, not relaxing his vigilance. "The tong war has kept many foreign devils away. Those



who come to my store ask many questions, but make few purchases."

"Old man," cut in Chang sharply, "I was referring to your business in the white drug."

"*Aih yah!* I do not handle it! I—I am too old and slow-witted to engage in such a dangerous enterprise."

Thoughtfully, Louie Chang lighted another cigarette.

"I am sorry," he said, studying the old man's face. "An expected shipment has failed to arrive, and I am entirely out. I have orders to fill. I am prepared to pay extra for as much as you or Ah Fong can furnish, up to twenty ounces."

"I do not keep it, Louie Chang. I do not keep it. I know nothing of Ah Fong's business. I swear by the Three Pure Ones!" Foo Chan Wo looked into the other's cruel eyes and spoke with meaning emphasis. "Should the foreign devil officials search my place, they would not find so much as a grain of the forbidden drug."

With his right hand Chang held his cigarette to one side. With the long nail of his left forefinger he struck the ash, and watched it fall into a brazen censer bowl that stood on the floor.

"Well," he concluded, after a silence, "since you do not care to accommodate me, I shall be on my way. *Ho hang la!*"

"I do not keep it," repeated Foo. "I swear I—"

But Louie Chang, moving silently on his padded slippers, had walked his way.

For as long as it takes to cook rice properly, the old curio dealer sat huddled in his chair, too stunned even to think of his pipe. He was aroused presently by Foo San, who had come down to mind the store while her father went up to his midday rice.

"It is written," muttered Foo Chan Wo miserably, as he climbed the creaking stairs, "that a bamboo hedge seen at a distance appears impregnable; but standing before it, one may often discover a way of escape. *Aih*, may the Eye of Heaven help me find a way!"

#### IV

LITTLE Foo San picked up a small statue of Buddha, and, holding it up to the light, scrutinized it carefully for flaws. It was a remarkable piece of wood carving—a month's task for one of the fastest Can-

tonese workmen. The figure was of white Ningpo wood set on a base of polished black teak. Finding it perfect, Foo San placed it on the shelf by a similar statue, and, on her list, checked off the "Buddha twins."

"Yes, Frank," said the girl, with a little catch in her voice, "everything you say is true; but what can we do about it? My father is deeply indebted to Ah Fong, and could save his business in no other way."

Frank Wing frowned. He was a young man, clad in well-tailored American clothes. His face was that of the student and philosopher.

"As for the price"—he spoke with superb repression—"I do not wish to buy a wife. This is not China. However, had we known that your father proposed betrothing you to Ah Fong, my father, to prevent it, would have paid any reasonable sum."

Foo San shook her sleek head so emphatically that she set her jade pendants tinkling.

"That would have done no good. My father was beset by Ah Fong on one side and by Louie Chang on the other. He greatly fears both of them, and marrying me to Ah Fong will help to pull the dragon's teeth. It is only the thought of helping my father that prevents me from slaying myself; for surely I would rather die than marry Ah Fong!"

The young man, a stricken look in his eyes, held silent.

"Frank," said the girl suddenly, leaning across the counter and lowering her voice, "why don't you tell the officials about Ah Fong's unlawful dealings in morphine? I know it is a very disgraceful thing to run with tales to the foreign devils; but if Ah Fong were to be taken to prison, I would not have to marry him!"

Frank Wing looked up quickly. Before he could speak, they were warned by the creaking stairs that old Foo Chan Wo had finished his midday rice and was returning to the store. With a whispered adieu to the girl, Wing turned quickly and walked his way.

"*Ho hang la!*" whispered Foo San. "I hope you have a safe walk!"

"Daughter," rumbled Foo Chan Wo, "who was that man?"

Foo San trembled; then, lifting her head, she spoke politely.

"That was the eldest son of Wing, the dealer in silks."

Foo Chan Wo started. For about the time it takes one to name the Five Relations, he looked at the girl without a word. When at length he spoke, his voice was stern but his eyes were gentle.

"He comes here quite often, does he not?"

"Yes, honorable father."

Foo grunted into the long stem of his pipe, and again was silent for a space.

"He is welcome here, my thousand of gold?"

Foo San bowed her pretty head.

Another grunt into the long-stemmed pipe. Then Foo spoke softly to himself.

"And Confucius said: 'Where love is, yield not to an army!' *Aih*, this is a cross-woven net! She loves the gifted son of my friend Wing, the dealer in silks. I have betrothed her to Ah Fong, whom we both despise. Ah Fong thinks to save his own throat by hiding his forbidden drug in my store. Louie Chang seeks revenge by setting the foreign devil officials upon me. *Aih yah*, surely I am beset by beasts!"

"What is that you said, father?" inquired Foo San.

"I said, daughter, get back to your work. You have chattered enough for one day. Do not again disturb my peaceful meditations."

Obediently Foo San returned to her task of checking the latest shipment of curios. Foo Chan Wo took up his pipe, and for a long time sat with half-closed eyes, puffing idly.

Presently the old curio dealer looked up. There was an eager note in his voice.

"In that lot, Foo San, you have found the Buddha twins? Bring them to me."

Foo San took the two statues from the shelf and set them on the desk before her father. Foo Chan Wo looked at them for a moment; then, nodding his head many times, he arose and put on his street cap.

He turned to Foo San. She had been crying.

"My thousand of gold," said the old man kindly, "let me not see the waters of sorrow dimming your eyes. When a bitter cup is given you to drink, then drink it; but grieve not over what may never be. Mind the store now until I return."

When Foo Chan Wo returned, he took the Buddha twins from his desk and went upstairs to a room where he would be un-

disturbed. There he took a small package from beneath his blouse, unwrapped it, and disclosed a quantity of some white, flaky substance.

"It is written," mused Foo Chan Wo, "that on a certain day Len Chen Len, being attacked by two wild beasts, so maneuvered things that he set them against each other, and so escaped, while they tore each other's throats. Len Chen Len was a wise man!"

So speaking, Foo picked up one of the twins and held it upside down. Pressing with one finger on the god's protruding navel, he pushed with his thumb against the teakwood base. Instantly the base flew up, like a lid, disclosing a hollow space inside the statue.

Into this hollow space Foo quickly crammed about half of the white drug, then snapped the spring base shut again. He proceeded to conceal the remainder of the morphine in the other statue.

A half hour later, Foo Chan Wo dispatched one of the statues to Ah Fong. With it was a note of congratulation signed "Louie Chang."

At the same time the other twin was dispatched by trusted messenger to Louie Chang. With it was a politely worded note of condolence, signed "Ah Fong."

"It is written," Foo Chan Wo rumbled into his long-stemmed pipe, "that the Buddha twins are emblems of good fortune to the one possessing both; but whosoever possesses one without the other walks within the shadow of death. By the seven-faced god, let it be so. *Tsau kom lok!*"

## V

THAT evening revenue officers, acting on information furnished by an Americanized Chinese who declined to give his name, raided the home of Ah Fong. During the search, one of the raiders picked up an odd-looking statue and chanced to see, lodged between the teakwood base and the Buddha's feet, a small speck of white powder. The officer touched the powder with the tip of his tongue, then called the agent in charge.

"Morphine, chief," he said. "I'll bet the old god is full of it!"

"Open it up, Ah Fong," the chief curtly ordered.

"No sabe," growled the morphine dealer.

The chief swung a raiding hatchet—with

astonishing results. Ah Fong was arrested and charged with violation of the Harrison Act.

As soon as the wagon had left with Ah Fong, the agents closed down on the cigar store of Louie Chang. Here, during an otherwise unsuccessful search, they discovered a statue of Buddha identical with the one found at Ah Fong's place.

"Open it up, Louie," the chief ordered.

"I don't know anything about that," returned Louie Chang in his usual silky tones.

Again the chief swung a raiding hatchet. Louie Chang was promptly arrested and charged with violation of the Federal drug laws.

The next morning, after the commissioner's hearing, both Ah Fong and Louie Chang were released on bail furnished by a professional bond broker.

The two drug venders met, shortly after, by a stairway near Chang's store. Neither spoke; but two explosions blended into a single dull roar that rumbled and echoed in the narrow alley.

Ah Fong was dead with a bullet through his heart when the police reached him.

Louie Chang breathed his last on the way to the Emergency Hospital.

With much facial contortion, Foo Chan Wo put the finishing touches on the crimson strip of paper that lay before him on his desk. Then, with as much haste as his great weight permitted, he went out to the front of his store. On a panel between one window and the door he pasted the announcement that his daughter, Foo San, was that day betrothed to the eldest son of Wing, the dealer in silks.

"I am very sorry," he chuckled to himself, as he returned to his desk. "Yes, it is too bad. However, I shall eat much better now."

Foo San, singing as she went about her work, presently drew near her father's desk.

"Honorable father," she said, her eyes bright as jewels, "I have searched everywhere, but I cannot find the Buddha twins I gave you the other day. Did you misplace them?"

"By the seven-faced god!" Foo Chan Wo roared into his long-stemmed pipe, in great glee. "Daughter, I think I placed them—most successfully!"

#### AT THE PLAY

I sit beside you at the play,  
And do not even know its name  
Or care who takes the leading rôle;  
Yet I am glad we came.

The overture is done. A hush—  
The lights grow dim, the curtains rise,  
And all the magic of the scene  
I watch, reflected in your eyes.

Effective grouping, clever lines,  
Exotic fragrance in the air—  
How can these things impress me, when  
Alluring shadows touch your hair?

The atmosphere is rather good,  
The thrilling action moves apace;  
Enough for me to look upon  
The vivid beauty of your face.

What do they know of love, who act  
Emotions with such careful art?  
What do I know of acting, since  
I only seek to learn your heart?

Ruth F. Eliot

# A Pilgrimage of Adventure<sup>\*</sup>

A REALISTIC STORY OF PRESENT-DAY AMERICAN LIFE

By Sam Hellman

**H**ENRY TRENT, instructor in logic at Walsingham University, is threatened with a breakdown from overwork, and his uncle, chancellor of the university, advises him to go out into the world, to live in the fresh air, and to give his brain a rest. Striking off at a venture, Trent finds himself in Hopetown, where he gets employment as a laborer on a new building being erected for the Acme Works.

The rich man of Hopetown is young Arnim Hope, a drunkard and libertine. Meeting Trent, it is Hope's whim to invite the stranger into his house, where they sample his private stock and he displays his photographs of women. Among these Trent notices one of a girl whose fine face makes her seem utterly out of place in such a collection, and he purloins it. Later he identifies it as a photograph of Janet Preston, whose father, a contractor, is putting up the new Acme building.

Preston, it develops, is in straits for ready money, and Hope, who has some private grudge against him, has used his influence to prevent the Hopetown banks from granting the contractor a loan. Trent goes before the directors of the First National, and by an eloquent appeal persuades them to advance Preston ten thousand dollars. This wins him his employer's fervent gratitude, but Miss Preston disapproves his interference in the matter of the photograph, and at her request Trent returns it to Hope.

Trent has made a friend of Buck Staley, assistant foreman on the Acme job, and has taken a room at the house where Staley boards. Buck is in love with Grace Pritchard, and is greatly distressed because, although Grace seems to like him, she will not listen to any suggestion of marriage. He asks Trent for advice; and so, a little later, does Miss Pritchard, who reveals that she has been secretly married to Arnim Hope.

## XVI

**F**OR a moment Trent was almost stunned by Grace Pritchard's surprising revelation.

"In June of last year," the girl went on, "we went to Springfield and were married. I don't know what possessed me. I must have been crazy. Three days after the wedding Arnim began drinking terribly, and finally he left me alone in the hotel. It was ten days before he came back. He had a paper annulling the marriage. I didn't understand. I didn't even know what annulling a marriage meant. He was very much intoxicated, but from what he said I gathered that he told the judge he had been trapped into marriage while he was drunk. Then he went away."

"Let me understand," said Trent. "Do you mean to say that he had the marriage annulled on his own statement, and that you never had a chance to present your side of the case?"

"Yes—he just showed me the decree."

"I don't know a great deal about law," commented Trent; "but there is certainly something strange about this. I can't imagine a court granting an annulment purely on the evidence of the one seeking it. That would be contrary to all justice and common sense."

"I don't know," said Miss Pritchard. "He told me—"

"What happened after that?"

"He came back to Hopetown."

"And you?"

"I got sick, and it was nearly a month before I returned here."

"When did you see him again?"

"I went to him after I got out of the hospital, not on my own account, but—but for another."

"Another?" asked Trent dully.

"Yes." The girl's voice dropped to a whisper. "He's six months old now. I asked him, for the baby's sake, to have the annulment destroyed. He laughed at me. I threatened to go to a lawyer."

"All right," he said, "if you want every-

<sup>\*</sup> Copyright, 1922, by Sam Hellman—This story began in the March number of *MURKIN'S MAGAZINE*



body in town to know that you inveigled me into a marriage while I was drunk. You know around here they think I'm drunk all the time. What will your mother in Jasper think about it?"

"That," the girl went on, "was his strongest weapon against me. He knew the blow would kill my mother. I threatened to throw the child and myself into the river, but he paid no attention. He did offer me money, but I wouldn't take it. I went to work."

"And the baby?"

"He is with a family in the country. I go once a week to see him."

"Poor girl!" said Trent, leaning over and patting her hand. "You have had lots of trouble, but with Buck—"

"Trouble!" cried the girl. "You don't know! A few months ago I met George. He was so clean and big and good!"

"He loves you."

"Yes, and how can I hurt him? I can't give him up. I—"

"You are hurting him now," interrupted Trent. "Your melancholy, your refusal to marry him, are hurting him more than you realize."

"But what am I to do? I can't tell him!"

"Why not?"

"Because—because I'm a coward. I'm afraid—I'm afraid he might never want to see me again."

"You are doing Buck an injustice. He's no narrow-minded puritan. Tell him the truth, Grace." It seemed much gentler to call her by her given name. "Tell him just what you have told me. If I know Buck Staley, he will take you in his arms and kiss the last vestige of your worries away. Even if I am wrong in my estimate of his character, you will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that you have dealt honestly with him. You can't go on as you have, you know."

"No, I can't—that's true enough. I'm half out of my mind now; but I haven't told you everything yet. A few weeks ago I went to see Arnim Hope again, and begged him to keep my secret. You see what I have sunk to! I told him about George. He told me he would if I stayed and had dinner with him. He fell asleep before it was over, and I left."

She glanced at Trent. He nodded that he was listening.

"Yesterday," the girl went on, "he left

word at the store that I should meet him at the Claridge. I met him in the ladies' parlor, on the second floor. He—he wanted me to come back to him."

"You mean he wanted to remarry you?"

"No," was the colorless response. "He didn't. He said that if I refused he would tell George everything—about the baby, and about trapping him when he was drunk."

"Yes?"

"I didn't even answer him. I left. He followed me from the hotel, but I managed to get away from him in the crowded street. I saw you in the dining room, and I made up my mind to tell you everything and to beg you not to tell George. Then I changed my mind, and thought I would have you tell him the whole story. He's fond of you, and perhaps you can soften the blow."

"It would be much better," suggested Trent, "if you told him yourself. Remember that I am a comparative stranger to both of you. Don't you think he would bitterly resent your telling your intimate affairs to an acquaintance rather than to the man who loves you? Don't you see, Grace?"

"No, no! I can't—I can't! I have tried to make up my mind, but I can't!"

"Be calm and listen to me. In the first place, I don't believe much in the validity of that annulment. Let's consider that phase of the situation. Should it be discovered that the decree was granted illegally, then you are Hope's wife. In that event you would have no difficulty in getting a divorce, it seems to me. The world may say that you were foolish to marry him, but there is nothing reprehensible that can be charged against you. You follow me, don't you?"

Miss Pritchard nodded.

"In the second place," went on Trent, "you may utterly disregard Hope's threat to tell Staley. I can assure you that he has no intention of doing so. If he so much as mentioned your name to Buck, he would probably find himself lying on the flat of his back with his jaw and a couple of ribs in a state of fracture. Grace, you don't seem to have any real conception of Buck's love for you. He worships you—he idolizes you. Nothing you may have done or could do would be wrong in his eyes—nor in mine, either," Trent finished gently. "I believe in you and your goodness, Grace."

"I'm afraid," muttered the girl, "for myself, and for George. As you say, he has a violent disposition. If I told him, he might do something terribly rash. Won't you help me, please?"

"There is something in what you say," returned Trent, thoughtfully. "Buck might do something foolish."

Miss Pritchard took advantage of the opening.

"But you could tell him," she urged. "He's fond of you. I'll go away for a few days, and while I'm gone you—"

Trent interrupted.

"How many people in Hoptown know of your marriage?"

"Just you and one other person."

"You mean Hope?"

"No—a girl friend, a chum I went to in desperation. She tried her best to help me, but she couldn't do anything. He's such a terrible beast!"

"This girl friend of yours—is she entirely discreet?"

"I'd trust her with my life. You would, too, if you knew her."

"You are certain that she has kept your secret?"

"Yes. You will help me, Mr. Trent, won't you?"

He did not answer at once.

"Please, please! You are my last resource. If you don't, I shall take the baby and go a thousand miles away—"

"I'll help you as far as I can. It's a rather delicate piece of business, but I'll do what I can."

Impulsively the girl rose and placed her hands on his shoulder.

"Oh, you are so good!"

"It's all right, it's all right," soothed Trent. "Get a good night's sleep. I assure you everything will come out all right. I'll fix Buck. I'll—"

There was a knock on the door!

"Go back of that wardrobe over there!" cried Trent hoarsely. "You mustn't be seen here at this hour!"

The door clattered open.

## XVII

THE spirit of murder stood before them. Hate blazed in the eyes of Staley, and his thick frame rocked with passion. For a moment he hesitated on the threshold. His lips moved spasmodically, but a dam of red rage held back the words.

"Hello, Buck!" greeted Trent casually.

"Union meeting over? Grace and I were having a chat. Have a chair?"

"Damn you!" gritted Staley. "You'll fix me, will you? You rotten, lying sneak, you—"

"There's a lady present, Buck. Please moderate your language, or I shall be compelled to ask her to leave."

"Lady?"

Staley laughed with menacing harshness and took a step forward. Trent glanced at the girl by the wardrobe. Immovable she stood, her eyes distended in horror. He turned toward Staley.

"Buck," he said quietly, "let me tell you that Miss Pritchard—"

"Grace, you mean, don't you, you—"

"As you wish," returned the other.

"Grace came to me this evening for advice on a matter of extreme importance—a matter concerning your happiness as well as her own."

"You're a liar!" snarled Staley. "You brought her in here with that damned smooth college talk of yours. You can both go to hell, but I'll smash that face of yours!"

"Of course," Trent interrupted coolly, "you'll do nothing of the sort. If you'll listen to me quietly, you'll meet that strange phenomenon, the truth."

"If she came to you for advice," demanded Buck, "why did you tell her that you'd fix me? Why did you tell her to hide behind the wardrobe?"

"It's all easily explained. Didn't you ask me to help you in a certain matter?"

"I? Oh, bunk! What's she doing here?"

Trent turned to the girl.

"Grace, may I ask you to withdraw? Staley and I have something to talk over."

"Will you tell him?" whispered the girl.

"Yes—everything."

"I know all I want to know, right now," interjected Buck.

"Will you please step aside from the door, Staley, so that the lady may pass?" said Trent. "Good night, Grace," he added. "Don't worry. Everything will come out right."

The girl went to Staley.

"George," she said softly, "Mr. Trent will tell you everything. I love you, dear. I will always love you. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" muttered Staley.

Trent closed the door and placed a hand on Staley's shoulder.

"Buck, you have made quite an ass of yourself, but perhaps any one else would have done so under the circumstances. Sit down."

The fire had burned itself out. The young foreman dropped into the armchair and his shoulders slumped wearily.

"Damn you!" he cursed, with a catch in his throat. "You've got Grace bluffed and me bluffed and everybody bluffed. Now I've lost her!"

"Quite the contrary is the case," returned Trent cheerfully. "You have just found her, Buck. Her love for you is a beautiful, transcendent thing. How great is yours?"

"I don't know," was the truthful reply.

"Well, in less than half an hour you'll know and I'll know. Buck, Grace has told me everything—the reason for her melancholy, the reason for her refusal to marry you, and—"

"What is it? What is it?"

Staley raised eager eyes from which all anger had departed.

"First of all," said Trent, "I want you to promise that you will listen without interruption to what I have to say, and that you will not fly into any rages. After everything has been told, you and I will calmly discuss what is to be done. Is it agreed?"

"Yes. First tell me why she came to this room."

"Very well! The story may as well begin there. She came here because she wanted to ask for my help in the same matter in which you sought assistance. She wanted to see me to-night, and at a time when you would not be present. She waited up until I came home. Then she called on me. I thought at the time it was rather an indiscreet thing to do, but she was in a state of such mental disturbance that trifling details of convention were not to be considered. When you knocked, I thought it might be the landlady, and I didn't care to have to explain to her. Had I known it was you, there would have been no attempt at concealment. Is that clear?"

"How did she happen to make up her mind to tell you? She hardly knows you. Doesn't she trust me?" he finished bitterly.

"She trusts you so much, Buck, and loves you so much, that she shrinks from hurting you."

"Hurting me?"

"Better let me tell the story without in-

terruption. There's quite a bit to tell, and I'm certain that all your questions will be answered satisfactorily in the course of the narrative."

"All right!"

"At noon to-day," began Trent, "I saw Grace and Arnim Hope coming out of the elevator at the Claridge."

"Grace and Hope!"

Staley's jaw dropped and his hands clenched.

"Yes. I mention that because it is the reason why she decided to tell me everything to-night. She was afraid that I would tell you of meeting them."

"God!" cried Staley. "Go on, go on!"

Slowly, deliberately, and without emphasis, Trent repeated Grace's confession. For the most part, Staley listened with a forced stolidness. From time to time the blood flared into his neck and cheeks, his lips quivered, and his eyes blazed with a cold cruelty; but there were no gusts of rage, no cursing, no threats. At the conclusion of the story he said quietly:

"I'll kill Hope!"

Trent shook his head.

"That will solve no problem."

"I'll kill Hope!" reiterated Staley.

"What good will be accomplished by that?"

"It will make Grace a widow, that's sure," was the grim reply.

"Listen, Buck—you now know everything. Do you still want Grace, clouded marriage, child, and all?"

"Yes—I want her more than ever. Poor kid! I wish she would have told me instead of you, though."

"Don't you see? She was afraid of losing your love. She feared, too, that you would do something violent, that you would kill Hope—"

"Well," returned Staley, "I will!"

"Don't be foolish! Of course you won't. Is it your idea to demonstrate your great love for Grace by dangling at the end of a rope? She needs you. What help can you be to her in jail? Hasn't she troubles enough? Do you want to add to them?"

"I'd be glad to hang if I could get rid of that—"

"And at the trial," pursued Trent, "I suppose you would like to have all the facts come out about Grace's bitter experiences, to furnish a Roman holiday for the gossips and scandalmongers. To satisfy

your lust for vengeance you would plunge her into hell. Is that love, Buck?"

"Why should that hound be allowed to live?"

"Ah, Buck, there you wander into the complexities of an inscrutable Providence! Snakes and vipers are among us, but we know not why. Perhaps," Trent added gently, "Hope is here to take the dross from your love and lift it to the sublime heights of purity and sacrifice. Perhaps—but let's get back to grim realities. I have some suggestions to make. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes. Go on, Slim!"

"Good!" smiled Trent. "We are back on a comradely basis. Now, as for killing or assaulting Hope, let's forget all about it. That would mean nothing but trouble for you and Grace."

"What's your idea?"

"First, I propose, with your help and consent, to make a quiet investigation. There is something very suspicious about that annulment. I know a newspaper man here—a trained seeker after facts. I think I can interest him in this case, and we can rely on his discretion. I'm certain that the annulment can be revoked."

"What good would that do?" demanded Staley. "Then she would be Hope's wife again."

"For a brief period, yes; but suppose you were married to-night and the annulment was found to be fraudulent. Would you be any better off? Then think of the child. It has some rights you mustn't overlook."

"Suppose the annulment was a fake—what happens then?"

"Then the marriage stands valid, Grace's name is entirely cleared, and the child is provided for."

Staley made a gesture of impatience.

"I'll take care of the kid!"

"That's all very well; but, after all, Hope is the father of the child, and there is no reason why he should not be compelled to provide for its future. If we can overturn the annulment, Grace can readily get a divorce, and then you two can marry. What do you think?"

"The damned dog!" growled Staley. "He ought to be bumped off!"

"We've got past that point," said Trent. "It's necessary that he should live a while, for your sake and Grace's. Suppose you sleep over the matter to-night. To-mor-

row morning we can go over the situation more calmly and in more detail. In the meantime let us hope that alcoholism doesn't finish Hope before we finish our own little job with him."

"Alcohol won't get him," retorted Staley.

"Good night!" Trent pressed his hand tightly.

"She loves me?" asked Buck, in a whisper.

"Can you doubt it? Let me suggest that in passing Grace's room you should knock at the door; and when she asks who it is, reply, 'It is I—George—and I love you!'"

"Just about what I was figuring on doing," returned Staley, with a brick-red flush; "except that I was also going to tell her that I know everything now."

"The amendment," laughed Trent, "is accepted."

With the departure of Buck, a physical weariness assailed the young professor, and he sagged down on the bed.

"I came here for a rest," he reflected. "I wonder how old Dr. Hastings would classify the life I'm leading!"

The thought brought a laugh to his lips. A sound of hurried footsteps came to his ears, and the door was flung violently open. Staley, white and startled, pushed in.

"She's gone!" he cried thickly.

"Gone? Grace?"

"Yes," panted Buck. "I knocked and knocked at her door. I got scared. I thought maybe she had— Then I went in. There was a light burning. Things were scattered all over the place—clothes and such like—but she was gone!"

"Did she leave any message? Did you look?"

"Yes, yes—I looked all over, but there was nothing. Damn Hope!" Suddenly he drew back. "I wonder," he said slowly, "if she could have gone to—"

"Buck," cut in Trent sharply, "don't say that. It's an unworthy thought."

"I'm sorry," he muttered; "but I've got to kill that hound!"

"We've gone all over that ground," said the other, with a trace of weariness. "The whole thing is simple. Grace was afraid to face you after hearing the story. So—"

"Where do you think she has gone?"

"That's easy. I imagine she's on the way either to her mother's home in Jasper or to the place in the country where the



baby is. Heaven knows the girl needs some rest and quiet after what she has been through!"

Staley's eyes brightened.

"I guess you're right. Do you know where the baby is?"

"No—she didn't tell me. In the morning, if I were you, I would try her mother's place first."

Buck shook his head.

"I will, but something tells me she'll go to the kid. Where is it? Hope knows, doesn't he?"

"I understand—that is, I gather from what Grace told me that he does."

"By God, then," cried Staley fiercely, "I'll squeeze the information out of his rotten throat!"

"Go and get a night's rest, Buck. You can't do anything now, you know—that's clear. To-morrow we'll get together on the proposition."

"You'll help me?"

Trent nodded a tired assent, and Staley departed heavily.

After a while Trent opened his door a crack. Buck had passed beyond his quarters, and in the dim light a figure with bowed head could be seen before the open door of Miss Pritchard's room. Slowly Trent returned to his bed. There was a woman's face in his dreams that night, but it was not Grace's.

### XVIII

BOTH men came late to breakfast the next morning. Staley's red-lidded eyes and pasty cheeks told of sleepless, tossing hours. Trent, too, felt far from rested, yet he was able to make away with his food. Buck gulped a cup of coffee.

"I'm going to Jasper to-day," he said, after they had left the table. "Will you square me with the boss?"

"I'll look after it," Trent readily promised. "What about Mrs. Murphy? Is she asking any questions?"

"Didn't give her a chance. Told her that Grace's mother was sick, and that she had taken the six o'clock train for home."

"That's good! Now you see what you can find out in Jasper. I'll work at this end."

Staley seized Trent's hand.

"You're the best guy in the world, Slim!"

"Tell me, Buck, where is the women's exchange where Grace has been working?"

"On Main Street, next to the trust company. You know where that is."

"I'll drop in this morning. They may know something, but I doubt it."

A woman at the exchange could furnish no information.

"I wouldn't be surprised if Miss Pritchard was ill," she told Trent. "She's been looking kind of bad of late."

Later Trent went to the office of the *Star*. Fortunately he found McAtee in and not too busy to talk.

"I want to ask you a hypothetical question," he said.

"Involving the undistributed middle?" grinned the newspaper man.

"No—I long ago gave up hope of elucidating that to you. This involves common sense and perhaps a bit of legal knowledge."

"Shoot, flatterer!"

Trent told the story of the marriage and annulment without using either names or places. At the conclusion he asked:

"Now, McAtee, can a marriage be legally annulled in this State on the evidence of one party?"

"She got no notice of the action at all?"

"None whatever."

"You mean to say," demanded the newspaper man, "that this bird just went out for a walk and returned with a decree of annulment?"

"That's my understanding."

"Crudely, professor, that's the bunk! It just happens that I recently covered a story involving these very points. To begin, if you file an annulment in this State, it cannot be tried until the next term of court. In the second place, papers would have to be served on the lady, and if she had flown the coop there would have to be notice by publication for thirty days. As I get you, this was all pulled in a day or two. Somebody's been stringing you!"

"No," returned Trent, "what I am telling you actually happened. I can vouch for the truth of the girl's statements."

"How about the marriage?" asked McAtee. "Was that on the square—legal in every way?"

"As far as I know," was the reply. "It would seem to me that the mere fact that the man thought it necessary to seek an annulment would indicate that he recognized the validity of the ceremony."

"Logical as ever, professor! How can I help you further?"

"I'd like to have some investigating done. Would it be possible for you to take a trip to Springfield and—"

"I'm going up there day after to-morrow," interrupted the reporter, "on the Grant case—the poisoning, you know. What do you want me to do?"

"You'll regard the whole affair as strictly confidential?"

"Yes."

"Well, the man in the case is Hope—Arnim Hope."

"Hope! I thought you asked me if a marriage in this State could be legally annulled in the manner described."

"I did."

"What the deuce has the word 'legally' to do with anything that Hope's mixed up with? Your hypothetical question should have been, 'Can a marriage in this State be financially annulled?'"

"Perhaps it should have," admitted Trent, with a smile.

"There aren't any laws in this county applicable to Hope," McAtee went on. "He's the party angel, and can beat any candidate he wishes to."

"Will you look into the records for me, McAtee? That's all I want you to do. I'll attend to the rest."

"I will, if there are any records." The newspaper man seemed dubious as to their existence. "Who's the lady in the case?"

"Grace Pritchard Hope."

"Pritchard, Pritchard!" ruminated McAtee. "Wait a minute!"

Digging down into his desk, he brought up some clippings and folded sheets of paper.

"My private morgue," he explained. "You never can tell when they'll come in handy. Here we are! This is from our correspondent in Shafter. It's what we call a query. Here!"

From a telegram form Trent read:

Young fellow and pretty girl married here to-day Justice Hauck. Won't tell names. Two old residents say man Arnim Hope. Get story Hope-town. No chance here.

"That's the marriage I refer to," said Trent. "The date is about right."

"About a year and a half ago," commented McAtee. "I remember it well. I went down to see Heflin, Hope's man of business, and asked him if it was true and if we could use it. I recall his exact words."

"I do not know whether it is true or

not," he said; "but I would suggest that nothing should be done with the matter."

"And so," remarked Trent, "nothing was?"

"And so," rejoined the reporter, "nothing was. A suggestion from the Hope office is—well—"

"Anything else here?" asked Trent, tapping the pile of clippings.

McAtee hastily thumbed through the memoranda.

"Nothing bearing on this case, but I'll tell you what I'll do—on my way to Springfield I'll drop off at Shafter and see what I can dig up. I'll let you know what develops in both places."

"It won't get you into trouble, will it?"

"I don't know, and I don't much care. I'm about fed up working for these pups, anyhow. I hope we can get little Arnim and put the screws to him. Believe me, if there are any records I'll run them down."

From the *Star* Trent went to Preston's office.

"Sorry for being so late, but I had an important matter to look into this morning. I'll drop in on my lumber pile this afternoon."

"Nothing doing!" returned the contractor. "I need you near me. I can use you to advantage hustling up shipments and kind of looking after things for me."

Trent demurred that he knew nothing of the building business.

"Maybe not," agreed Preston; "but you know a barrelful about human nature, and I've learned that you can't even put up a good chicken shed without that knowledge. Now about salary—"

"Leave it just as it is," put in Trent promptly. "Four dollars a day is sufficient for all my needs; but I must make two conditions—my work must not be confined to the office, and you must let me have what time I need for attending to certain private matters."

"Whatever you say. Do you know, I think I'm going to get through with that Acme job in good shape. Ever since you took a hand things are breaking right."

"How are finances?"

"Good. Ahearn came in to see me yesterday, and practically promised to see me through the contract. You must have made a great impression on him. He talked about you most of the time."

"Ahearn," remarked Trent, "has the unique distinction of being about the only

individual in Hoptown who hasn't got Hopophobia. He's not afraid of Arnim."

"I'm not, either—now," growled Preston. "He can go to the devil as far as I'm concerned!"

"Good!" was the younger man's laughing reply. "That makes three of us. A good start in the campaign to rid the town of his influence!"

The stenographer entered with a letter.

"From Mr. Heflin," she announced.

"There's a boy outside who says he's to wait for an answer."

"From Heflin, eh? That's Hope's man, isn't it?" Trent inquired.

The contractor did not answer. Puzzled, he was reading the communication. Grimly and without comment, he passed it over. Trent read:

On the eve of his departure for New York, Mr. Hope instructed me to notify you that he had considered your application for relief in the matter of the contract for the construction of the addition to the Acme Building, and had decided to grant your request. Instructions have, therefore, been given at the First National Bank to extend credit to you up to thirty thousand dollars. Mr. Hope has also consented, in view of difficulties encountered in the early stage of the work, over which you had no control, to waive all penalties for delay up to this time. It is his desire that you should complete the job without loss to yourself.

You must realize, Mr. Preston, that this is purely an act of kindness. In return, Mr. Hope has a trifling favor to ask of you. One of your employees—a stranger, who goes under the name of Trent—has grievously offended my client. He is convinced that the young man in question is an undesirable resident in Hoptown, and looks to you for such steps as will rid the city of him.

Mr. Hope will return from New York in a few days, and he expects that by that time you will have found the means of granting his request. Will you please let the bearer of this letter know if you may be counted upon? A simple "yes" will be sufficient.

By the way, the building inspector tells us that the south wall of the addition extends an inch or so beyond the building line. It would be most regrettable if the work had to be done all over again. However, I am quite sure that Mr. Hope can adjust matters at the City Hall for you.

"Crude, don't you think?" said Trent.

"Rough stuff, I call it," snapped Preston. "Miss Tracy!" he shouted.

The girl came in.

"Do you ever use cuss words?" the builder asked her.

"Me?" returned the stenographer. "I should say not—not me!"

"You don't mind carrying some for me a few feet, do you?"

"What?"

"Tell that boy outside to tell Mr. Heflin that Arnim Hope can go straight to hell."

"Very well," said Miss Tracy primly, and departed.

"Thinks he can run you out of town, does he?" grumbled Preston.

"Are you sure," rejoined Trent, "that what you have done is prudent? I am virtually a stranger to you, and that's a wonderful opportunity you are throwing away."

The contractor made a movement of anger.

"What do you take me for? Do I look Judas enough to sell out my best friend, after what you have done for me? I don't care if I lose the shirt off my back, but you needn't fear that I'll do any dirty work for Arnim Hope!"

"What," asked Trent, "does that threat about the building line mean?"

"The building line's all right enough, but probably Heflin has fixed it with the commissioner to make trouble for me, if necessary."

"You're within the line, then, are you?"

"No—I believe I'm an inch or two over, but I asked Fitzpatrick about it, and he said that it was an unused alley and would make no difference. I dare say Hope could make him change his mind, if he wanted to, though."

"Well," said Trent cheerfully, "we'll wait until that happens, anyhow. How is Miss Preston?"

"She'll be back to-morrow."

"Oh, she's out of town?"

"She went to visit some friends up in the country—in Davis County."

Expecting some word from Staley, Trent walked to the boarding house. In the two days that had elapsed he had received only one message—a scribbled post card that read:

No trace of Grace in Jasper. Have another tip that I am following up.

There was no letter from Staley, but Mrs. Murphy had a message.

"He called up from Springfield," said the landlady. "Said to tell you that he hadn't found out anything, and that he was going to New York to get the information from a certain man. He said you would know the man's name."

"Is that all?" asked Trent, disappointed. "It's a wonder," he continued half aloud, "he wouldn't show some curiosity

about what I might have found. I'm afraid—"

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Murphy. Thank you."

In his room he pondered the situation. Buck was wasting his time—of that Trent felt certain. Hope knew nothing of Grace's whereabouts, and a meeting between him and Staley in New York might lead to regrettable consequences. The girl's disappearance, too, puzzled him. Had she taken her life? He had expected that she would try to get in touch with him, to ascertain Buck's reaction to her story.

Suddenly it came to Trent that he had really done very little toward finding her. The thought spurred him to action. He left the house.

Not far from the First National Bank he found Ahearn's manufacturing establishment. The director was in.

"How goes the sense of humor?" he asked with a grin.

"Haven't lost a case yet," returned Trent; "but I've come to you for a little reinforcement."

Concealing Grace Pritchard's name, he told Ahearn the story of Hope's matrimonial escapade.

"Sounds like him! I'll bet you'll find the annulment phony. If you do, that kid will have a few millions coming to him, sure enough!"

"Just at this moment I'm more interested in finding the girl."

"You haven't even told me her name. How—"

"I don't believe it would be fair to her just now. Tell me, Mr. Ahearn, how much does Heflin know of Arnim Hope's private affairs?"

"Everything. He keeps everything for that hound except his conscience—and Hope hasn't one. I guess he knows more about his boss's affairs than Hope does himself. Arnim forgets a lot while he's drunk, but Heflin's a cold, sober bird."

"Then you think he would know about the marriage and the child?"

"I don't believe there's any question about it," returned Ahearn promptly. "It's a hundred to one that he took care of the annulment. Heflin's as shrewd as they make 'em. He used to be a pretty fine lawyer and not such a bad fellow. I don't know just how he got tied up with Hope, but he does all the young man's dirty work for him now."

"I think I'll call on Mr. Heflin."

"Then let me give you a tip. I don't know anything about his sense of humor—I doubt whether he has any—but he's smarter than a whip. He'll never fall for the sort of stuff you put over on Oscar Gardner and those other guys. You can't bluff him."

"Thanks for the information. Where did you say his office was?"

Trent had no difficulty finding it. "Estate of Tracy Hope," read the austere lettering on the glass of the door.

In a corner of a small, murky room sat Heflin, boring through the semidarkness with cold, blue eyes. Trent, smiling, approached the man of business. A man of business he indeed seemed to be, with his thin lips, decisive jaw, and steady, metallic gaze.

"My name's Trent."

"Yes."

"May I sit down?"

"If your business requires it."

"It does," returned Trent. "Pleasant weather we are having."

"Yes—but obviously you didn't come to tell me that. I have a window."

"It's rather a dusty one," observed Trent critically. "Almost opaque, I should say. However, my remarks are purely introductory and conventional. You received Mr. Preston's reply to your letter referring to me?"

"Yes."

"May I ask why Mr. Hope is so anxious to have me leave your—or, rather, his charming city?"

"Your presence displeases him."

"Ah, I see! May I ask, Mr. Heflin, when Hoptown became a feudal fief of Arnim Hope?"

"I really don't care to discuss the matter with you." He leaned forward. "Purely as a friendly suggestion, however, I would recommend you to transfer your truly fine mental attainments elsewhere. Your health doesn't seem to be of the best, and I should regret to learn that it had been further impaired."

"Your interest really warms me," returned Trent. "Am I to understand that I am personally menaced by continued residence here?"

A suggestion of a smile crossed Heflin's thin lips.

"Not you so much, Mr. Trent, as the standards of education at Walsingham Uni-



versity—especially in the field of speculative philosophy.”

“A fellow alumnus?”

“No, but I have heard one of your lectures. Quite interesting, but rather naïve, I thought. Showed rather a lack of acquaintance with the practical, I should say.”

“Why, then, Mr. Heflin, begrudge me a bit of contact with the practical in this most practical of towns?”

“There’s quite some difference,” was the grim reply, “between the practical and the perilous.”

“That is something I must determine by experience.”

Heflin shrugged. There was a spell of silence.

“Do you know, professor,” said the man of business at length, “that there are certain gentry in this city, individuals of a rather suspicious, lawless type, who have reached the conclusion that you are an officer of the law—perhaps from the revenue department. You may possibly have noticed that in this section of the country the untutored classes have a rather crude manner of expressing displeasure.”

“Yes, I have noticed it,” returned Trent; “especially in the case of your master.”

“My employer.”

“As you wish. By the way, Mr. Heflin, I understand that at one time you practiced law—stood rather high at the bar, I hear.”

“I have withdrawn from practice.”

“So I gather; yet I imagine your acquaintance with the statutes is still of a pretty thorough nature. May—”

“My dear professor,” interrupted Heflin, with a cold smile, “your conversation is truly amusing, but I must deny myself the pleasure of listening further. You might conclude your talk, say, with Dolan at the Hall of Justice.”

“That is really not a bad suggestion. Tell me, is he well grounded in the laws of the State with reference to annulments—annulments of marriages?”

Heflin’s features remained immovable except for a slight tightening of the lips.

“I can’t say,” he returned. “I’m not familiar with the profundity of his legal knowledge. You might examine him.”

Trent waved a hand carelessly.

“Really, the information that I desire is of the most trifling nature—quite ele-

mentary, I’m sure. I am inclined to believe that even I could isolate the data I require at the public library. All I wish to know is the method of seeking an annulment, the length of time that normally should elapse between the filing of the petition and final action on the decree, the rights of the defendant, what penalties there are for perjury and the abortion of justice in such cases—you know, just the simple, fundamental facts. I’m quite sure you could tell me offhand. Did you ever handle any annulment cases, Mr. Heflin?”

“May I ask,” was the measured rejoinder, “if you have entered into an unfortunate marriage?”

“Not yet,” returned Trent. The smile vanished. “However, I know a girl who has. Her name is Pritchard—Grace Pritchard. Ever hear of her?”

“Can’t say I have. Belong here?” Heflin asked carelessly. “Well, well, I must be getting back to my work.”

Trent rose.

“Consider this, Mr. Heflin. I have all the facts in the Hope-Pritchard marriage and annulment. Mrs. Hope—do you understand?—Mrs. Hope has left the city to go to her child—Arnim Hope’s child. It is essential that I should speak to her on matters not relating to the annulment. I am quite certain that you know where the baby is. I’m not planning legal action at this time, but I must see Miss Pritchard—Mrs. Hope—at once.”

Heflin, leaning over his desk, was signing papers. He was apparently oblivious to the speaker’s presence and his words.

“Unless,” resumed Trent, “I find out before evening where I can find her, I intend to proceed at once to Shafter and Springfield.”

No sign from Heflin.

“As accessory, I may remind you—very well, if you don’t care to listen—”

His hand rattled at the knob. Heflin looked up with a smile.

“Going?”

“Will you do as I request?”

“Really,” was the reply, “I owe you an apology. I didn’t hear those last remarks of yours.”

“Good day,” said Trent.

“By the bye,” remarked Heflin conversationally, “care much about fishing? No? Well, you should acquire a taste. There’s a place I know up near Willow Springs where they have beautiful trout—

gamy lads, and lots of them. It's only forty-five miles from here on the Y. and T. There's a farmhouse about a mile north of the station—"

"North, did you say?" politely queried Trent.

"A bit east of north. Of course, the fish may not be there at the particular time you select to go, but—"

"Thanks very much! I think I'll take a trip up there this evening. I feel rather run down."

"The train's at a quarter to nine. You'll find, I'm sure, that the accommodations are far superior to those on the Shafter-Springfield division."

"It's been a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Heflin. May I venture the hope that we shall get together again?"

"It is altogether possible."

### XIX

PRESTON looked up at the buoyant step.

"I think," said Trent, "I'll go on a little fishing trip. Can you spare me for a couple of days?"

"Sure! Things are moving along fine. Be back by Saturday?"

"I hope to."

"Take your time. You're due for a rest."

"Remember me to Miss Janet on her return. To-morrow, you said, didn't you?"

"To-morrow night or Friday morning."

"I shall give myself the pleasure of calling almost immediately on my return."

"She'll be glad to see you," Preston assured him.

"Think so?"

"I know so," was the blunt response.

Trent walked toward his home through an unsavory part of town. A man lurching out through the swinging doors of a saloon almost ran into him. The fellow's ill-favored face and long limbs were immediately familiar.

"Hello, Frisco!" greeted Trent.

The tattered friend of the box-car experience was even more tattered than on that occasion.

"Well, if it ain't the kid!" He eyed the neat clothing. "Pickin's been pretty good?"

"Fair," was the modest response.

Frisco's voice dropped to a whine.

"Say, bo, I'm down on me luck. Kin ye stake me to a case note?"

"A what? Oh!"

Laughing, Trent passed over a one-dollar bill.

"Come on!" invited Frisco, generous in his new affluence. "Let's have a shot!"

"No, thanks—I don't believe I care for the stuff they sell in these places."

"It's rotgut all right," admitted the tramp. "Say, listen, bo—wanna get in on a good thing? Easy pickin's, lots of kale, and some real classy booze?"

Trent shook his head.

"Sorry, Frisco, but I've got to leave town to-night."

"Piece of work?"

"Yes."

"House job?"

"In a way," returned Trent, moving off.

"Lots of luck!" called Frisco.

"Thanks!"

"Well," reflected Trent, "I've been mistaken for a detective, a circuit attorney, and a housebreaker all in about three days. What next?"

The train for Willow Springs left at a quarter to nine and was due there shortly after ten. There was delay on the journey, however, and it was a few minutes after eleven when Trent reached the station. There would be no fishing that night.

Willow Springs was a one-street town with a one-man railroad station—the one man being a crabbed patriarch with a suspicious eye.

"Is there a hotel here?" asked Trent.

"Huh?" scowled the agent. "Ain't you able to see?" He pointed a withered claw. Trent followed it to a weather-beaten structure across the tracks. "You city chaps expect to find a sixteen-story building, I guess, hey?"

"You mean over that store?"

"Yeh. Ain't you able to see?"

"Thank you! I would like to ask another question, if I may."

"Go ahead!" snarled the patriarch. "I ain't got nothing to do except to send telegrams, sell tickets, make out freight receipts, be a brakeman, sweep out the office, fix reports, go—"

"Keep you pretty busy?"

"Ain't you able to see?"

"What I want to ask is this," said Trent. "I'm looking for a farmhouse that is said to be a mile north of here. I don't know the name of the people living there, but—"

"Ain't but one farmhouse north of here till you get to Braxton," cut in the agent.

"You must mean the Widder Samuels's place."

"I imagine that's it. Do you know whether there is a young woman there—a young woman with a child?"

"Be you her husband?"

"There is a child there, then?"

"I ain't said they ain't. Howsomer, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, leaving that poor sick woman by herself and with a baby. There ain't—there's one of my jobs calling me."

A staccato ticking came from the station.

Trent crossed the tracks happily. He had found Grace, and in a short time he would have her and Buck reunited. True, the agent had said that she was ill, but probably he had mistaken her pallor for sickness.

The "fisherman" spent the night in a small, badly ventilated room, on a stony bed. At sunrise he awoke. By seven o'clock, directed by the landlord, he was on his way to the Samuels farm.

The morning shimmered in sunshine. The road led through timbered country, rich in tint, inspiring in massive grandeur. A few hundred yards from the town a creek from the west turned at almost a right angle and took its course parallel to Trent's direction. The stream rapidly broadened, here tumbling over rocks, there leaving quiet pools for trout playgrounds.

The rich air of the Watana foothills tingled in Trent's lungs. He walked leisurely, a vital joy in each step.

"This," he reflected, "is the sort of place I should have chosen for a complete rest. Perhaps I'll come up here for a few weeks before returning to Walsingham."

He glanced at his watch. It was half past seven—much too early for a call. He found a natural rock stool by the stream bank, and seated himself there. For fifteen minutes he amused himself tossing pebbles into the swirling water.

A crunching sound came to his ears, and he glanced up at a one-horse buggy that had approached within a few yards. In the vehicle was an old man, white-bearded. By his side was a small black case. Trent rose and motioned the driver to stop.

"Are you a physician?" he inquired.

"I am," the old man replied.

"May I ask if you have just come from the Samuels place?"

"You may," was the irritable response; "but what business is it of yours?"

"I am on my way there," explained Trent, "to see a young woman. Is she your patient?"

"Are you the woman's husband?"

"No."

"Is it your child?"

"Doctor, I'm merely a friend of Miss—of the girl. Is she very ill?"

"Can't live," was the blunt reply.

"Double pneumonia combined with acute melancholia. If you know the rascal who is the father of her baby, you might have him come around and take a look at his completed job. Git up!"

For a minute or two Trent gazed after the moving vehicle. Then he set out for the Samuels house. Soon it came into view—a neat cottage with sloping roof and vine-clad walls, in the midst of a well kept garden dominated by a great, maternal willow tree. There was no movement about the place, nor was any sign of life visible through the white-curtained windows.

His first knock brought no response. The second was followed by the soft sound of slipped feet.

"Miss Preston!" gasped Trent. "What are you—"

## XX

JANET PRESTON placed an admonishing finger on her lips. The girl's eyes, shadowed with weariness and deep with sleeplessness, betrayed little surprise at Trent's visit.

"How is she?" he asked in a whisper.

Janet's shake of the head was discouraging. She motioned him to follow her.

Off the hallway, in what apparently had been the parlor, lay the shadow of what had been Grace Pritchard. The blue-lidded eyes were closed, and through the dark lips came spasmodic gusts of breath. The breast rose and fell with violent rapidity.

A motherly featured woman of more than middle age was at the head of the bed. She glanced questioningly from Trent to Miss Preston. The girl nodded. Two minutes passed without a word being spoken. Then Janet made a sign, and the young man followed her to the porch.

"She has been asking for you."

"For me?" said Trent. "How long has she been this way?"

"Since Wednesday. She came here on Monday night, and walked up from the station in a rainstorm. Mrs. Samuels says she was in a terrible state mentally."

Trent was puzzled by a strange look in Janet's eyes. "On Tuesday," the girl went on, "she was in a high fever, and she's been delirious ever since. I'm afraid there's not much hope."

"But you?" he asked.

"What does it matter?" was the cold response. "I am her friend. She sent for me, and I came yesterday. It's you she wants the most."

"Why didn't you telephone to me, then?"

"I was going to this morning. I hesitated for a while, because—well, because I don't think your presence will do any good. It might do harm."

"You puzzle me," said Trent.

The girl made no reply. He walked back into the parlor. The wan figure on the bed was stirring restlessly.

"The poor child!" half sobbed Mrs. Samuels. "Isn't it terrible? Will you stay here a while, Mr.—"

"Trent is my name. I am a friend of—er—Miss Pritchard."

"I want to take care of the baby," resumed the widow. "There really isn't anything you can do here. She might ask for water. It's in the pitcher there."

Trent gazed into the tortured features. The struggle for breath had brought beads to the wide brow—pearls of death. Moans came from the lips, whispered words, incoherent gaspings. Gradually he made out "George," and then his own name. "Trent knows everything," the sufferer gasped out. Unintelligible mutterings followed. Trent leaned back in his chair, weak with a feeling of helplessness.

Before him lay a human being who was dying largely because her desire to go on further had been lost. Pneumonia, he knew, was an enemy to be met with a combative front, an insistent will to live. Were Grace conscious, he could easily have provided the ammunition for the battle—Staley's forgiveness, Staley's great love; but now—

A paragraph from a metaphysical monograph by one Guido Caprizzi, of the University of Milan, came to him from the vast reaches of his reading:

The human subconsciousness is the last to die. It remains active and receptive long after the conscious faculties of the mind have atrophied. In many cases a stimulus directed at the subconsciousness is sufficiently powerful to create a condition wherein the coma of the conscious mind is penetrated.

Trent kneeled by the bed.

"Grace!" he whispered. "It is I, Trent! Don't you know me? George sent me. He loves you. He knows everything, and he loves you more than ever. He loves you—do you understand?"

The girl was apparently beyond comprehending. Trent glanced up. Janet was standing by the door. Without a word she passed on.

"Grace," resumed Trent, "George is here. He wants to get married to-night. You must get up and dress for your wedding—you and George. He loves you. He wants to get married now—to-night. Get up! George will be disappointed. He's waiting for you!"

There was a hiatus in the gasping, and a frown came into the beaded forehead. Trent gazed eagerly at the sick girl. Were Caprizzi's theories to be substantiated? He must not delay to take advantage of the rift.

"You must get up, Grace! George is here, waiting. He wants to get married. He loves you—loves you, Grace! Don't disappoint him!"

"George!" It was not a despairing moan, nor yet a question in agony, but a gentle breath, a puzzled whisper.

"Yes, yes," hastened Trent. "It's George. He loves you. He knows everything. He forgives everything. He loves you. Hurry—he wants to get married at once—now!" Then, with sudden inspiration, he went on: "The baby—your baby, Grace. George loves you both. The baby wants you. George wants you. He—"

"George!" came the soft whisper again.

Trent waited anxiously, with held breath. There was a movement of the sick girl's lids. The eyes slowly opened and turned toward him. He lifted her hand.

"You'll get well, won't you, Grace? George wants to get married immediately. Do you understand, Grace?"

"I'm going away, George. I love you!"

"But you mustn't go," insisted Trent. "You can't go. George wants to marry you. The baby wants you. You can't go. You must get up!"

"The baby!" whispered the girl. "Are you here, George?"

To her filmed vision Trent was Staley. He pressed her hand.

"Yes, yes—here I am, Grace!"

There was a movement of the dry lips—



a distortion, but plainly intended for a smile.

"Trent—he told you?"

"Yes, yes, sweetheart—everything! I know everything, and I love you more than ever!"

"I would suggest," interrupted a cold voice, "that it would be better not to tire out the patient with conversation, no matter what the character of it. The doctor said she must be kept quiet."

Trent rose slowly, looked at Janet, and returned his gaze to the figure on the bed. Grace's eyes were closed, and she lay still, but the breathing appeared less laborious and the lines of agony were less tense.

"She's better, don't you think?"

Miss Preston nodded.

"She does appear to be resting more easily. It was frightful last night. Do you think she has a chance to recover?"

"I'm almost certain that she will get well," returned Trent promptly. "I brought her a message—one of great combative and restorative power. Right now there is in her the germ of a determined effort to live. I believe that in pneumonia it is of the utmost importance that the patient should be infused with a determination to live."

"For you?"

The question and the tone puzzled Trent, but before he could make a reply Mrs. Samuels entered the room.

"The baby is asleep," she announced. "I'll watch for a while now. Did she ask for anything?"

"No. I think she is going to get well. Does the doctor come again this morning?"

"She does seem better," remarked the widow. "He'll be here again at noon. You'll wait, won't you?"

"Yes—I'll stay until this evening, unless I can be of some further help."

"I'm going out for a walk, Mrs. Samuels," said Janet. "I shall be back in a few minutes."

"May I accompany you?" asked Trent.

"If you wish," she replied, but there was no cordiality in her tone.

Their course took them silently toward the trout stream, a few hundred yards away.

"Is there a telephone in the house?" Trent asked suddenly.

"No—the nearest one is at the station. Do you wish to walk in that direction?"

"I'll go there after the doctor comes.

There isn't a train that Buck could take before five o'clock, even if he's back."

"Buck?"

"George—George Staley, Grace's—hasn't she ever spoken to you of him?"

"George? Oh!" gasped the girl. "I thought—"

She broke off, and her cheeks reddened. A light broke on Trent. There was a moment of pleasurable numbness; then he laughed.

"I know! You thought I was Buck, didn't you?" He checked himself suddenly. Had he gone too far? "I was merely acting a part," he went on, his words again under control, "to help Miss Pritchard to recovery. You overheard some scraps of our conversation. Buck is quite another individual, I assure you."

"That was a peculiar mistake," said Janet, in some confusion. "I should have known that George was not you. Your name is Henry, isn't it?"

"Say that again, won't you?"

"What?"

"Henry. I never knew it could sound so well," he added banally.

The girl laughed.

"Fie, and you a professor of logic!"

"You can't imagine how logical it sounds for you to say Henry!"

"Tell me about George."

"Buck," explained Trent, "is one of the finest gentlemen I have ever met. He is the assistant foreman down at the Acme. He loves Grace with such an affection as only great souls can be capable of. He—"

"He knows?"

"Everything. I'll tell you how I came into this affair. She has told you the whole story?"

"Yes. In fact"—there was a touch of bitterness in the tone—"I have been part of the story."

## XXI

"You!" exclaimed Trent. Recollection came. "Oh, yes—I remember her telling me that a girl friend shared her secret. She meant you, no doubt."

Janet nodded.

Trent told her the story of Grace's confession to him, and what had followed.

"You see," he concluded, "I have an idea that Buck will miss Hope in New York—I earnestly trust that he will—and the two will get back to Hopetown about the same time. Staley is an impulsive fellow,

and I am fearful of the result should the two meet. Hope, I know, is due to return this afternoon."

"Let's go to the station now."

"No—the train from New York is not due until three o'clock. I'll call up the boarding house before that time, and leave word with Mrs. Murphy that all is well, and that Buck must take the night local for Willow Springs."

"Do you feel quite sure that Grace will recover?"

"I am almost certain; but in any event Buck ought to be here."

"Of course!"

A space of silence followed. Janet Preston plucked a wild flower and nervously tore at the petals.

"Mr. Trent," she said at length, "I can tell you about that photograph now. Would you like to hear?"

"I don't think," he returned gravely, "that Mr. Trent would, but Henry would, if you think it necessary to tell him. Henry, I assure you, is quite convinced that whatever motive it was that actuated Janet to give Hope the picture was indubitably a good one."

"Perhaps Henry won't think so after he has heard everything."

"Henry," asserted Trent, "assures Janet that he will. Let's sit here"—indicating a smooth patch of bank by the stream.

"I've been angry with myself," said the girl, "ever since that night you brought the photograph. My treatment of you was shameful, not only because of what you had done for my father, but because of what you were trying to do for me. You will never know how it hurt me to force you to take the picture back, but I was afraid of Arnim Hope. I still am afraid of him."

"I know," nodded Trent. "All Hometown is."

"Mr. Trent, you—"

"Henry."

"Henry, you don't know the power that man wields. He owns all the courts, he owns the police, he is like the feudal lords we used to read about in the history of the Dark Ages. He has the power of high and low justice, and he exercises it. Everybody lets him have his way, because everybody is afraid of him. You are the only one who has dared to oppose him."

"Not I," corrected Trent, "but the

sense of humor. No power can stand against it."

"Apparently not."

"Can you?" he asked eagerly.

"Am I a power?" countered the girl.

"An irresistible power!"

She laughed.

"And you—are you an immovable force?"

"Hardly," returned Trent, and edged closer to Janet.

Both laughed youthfully. The girl's eyes grew serious again.

"Grace and I," she said, "have always been chums. We used to live on the same block, and we were always together. After her trouble with Hope she came to me. I had known him for years, and had always hated him for his overbearing, bullying habits. Grace was in a pitiable condition, and for a week she was terribly ill at our house. She did not care much about herself. It was the baby that nearly drove her to insanity. She wanted the child at least to have a name."

Trent noted the finger nails biting into the pink palms.

"One night," resumed Janet, "I resolved to help her. I went to Arnim Hope's house."

She hesitated.

"Janet," interposed her companion gently, "it isn't at all necessary for you to tell me the story."

"I want you to know," was the firm reply. "He was drunk, and he laughed at my pleas for Grace and the baby. He insisted that she had taken advantage of him while he was intoxicated to force him into marriage, and said he had the records of the court at Springfield to prove it. There was little use in arguing with him. He did offer to support the baby and pay the doctor's bills, and I told him I would tell Grace. All the time we were talking he kept drinking. He was an insulting brute! He tried to—I resisted his efforts. I'll pass over the details."

"Do," counseled Trent, whose lips had grown taut.

"He threatened to tell Grace's mother all about the affair. If you knew what a narrow-minded, straight-laced puritan Mrs. Pritchard is, you would understand the power of the threat. I started to leave. He jumped up and took hold of me, saying the most insulting things. I slapped him and struggled. I was wearing a fur

coat—the one you saw the other day at father's office. I managed to free myself and ran from the house, leaving the coat in his hands. I got home a wreck."

"The hound!" gritted Trent.

"The next day I told father that I had lost the coat. I was afraid he might not understand my visit to Hope, and I didn't feel at liberty to betray Grace's secret. I couldn't do that," she added simply.

Trent impulsively seized her hand and leaned forward.

"You are fine!" he said.

She made no effort to release her fingers, but went on with her narrative.

"Next day I got a note from Hope. He suggested that if I called that evening he would return the coat. I made no reply. That night he telephoned and repeated the suggestion. He said he was sorry for his conduct and wanted to apologize. I told him if that were true he could return the fur to my house. He said he would within the hour. He came with the coat. He had been drinking, as usual, and was just as insulting. The picture that is now in his house was on the piano in our living room.

"I'll take this," he said, "in place of the coat, and let me tell you that whenever I get a picture of a girl the girl follows. You'll come to me yet!"

"I made an effort to take it away from him. He cursed and threatened to call father and tell him about my visit, and about Grace as well."

"You should have called his bluff," suggested Trent. "That coward wouldn't have done anything; and if he had, your father would have beaten him within an inch of his life!"

"Perhaps, but I was thinking all the time of Grace. The poor girl was lying ill upstairs, and I couldn't do anything that might possibly add to her burden of trouble. I pleaded with Hope, but he laughed and went away with the photograph. I frankly admit that I was afraid of his power, just as you say the whole town is. He has been so ruthless and so vicious without ever having been called to account that he has us all frightened to death."

"I think his reign is near an end," said Trent grimly. "Did he trouble you any further?"

"Yes, but he never went to extremes. After a while I became reconciled to the loss of the photograph. Its presence in

Hope's house, I figured, would be more readily accounted for than a fur coat would have been. We had gone to school together, and it would be natural enough, I suppose, for him to have a picture of me. Besides, he might have obtained it from a gallery. There was no writing on it. At any rate, I let the matter drop until you took it away. Why did you?"

"I told you."

"I know, but I'd like to hear you say it again."

"Would you?" Trent asked eagerly. "The picture of you with the clear, clean eyes," he went on, "among those other photographs, was like a lily in a swamp, an orchid in a pool of scum, an angel in hell!"

"That, I believe," said Janet softly, "is the greatest compliment ever paid to a girl—a girl whom you had never seen!"

Trent leaned forward.

"You don't know how inadequate it sounds now that I have seen the girl. I—"

"There he is," interrupted Janet.

He turned. The doctor's buggy stood before the farmhouse. Both rose and hastened up the slope. The physician was leaning over the bed, holding the sick girl's wrist, when they entered the room. He glanced up.

"She's better," he grunted. "No thanks to you, I imagine," he added, glowering at Trent.

Janet laughed.

"Eh?"

"You're mistaken, doctor—it's all due to him. He isn't the man you think he is. He is a friend of Miss Pritchard."

"Sorry," was the short answer. "Never saw such a sudden change for the better. Pulse good, respiration and heart action a hundred per cent improved. Keep a close watch. I'll be back again this evening. Good-by!"

"Gruff," remarked Trent, "but seemingly efficient!"

"He's fine," returned Janet. "He's been looking after her as if she were his own child."

They took turns by the bedside. The sick girl's condition appeared to improve hourly. At three o'clock Trent went into Willow Springs and delivered his telephone message of good cheer to Mrs. Murphy, for relay to Staley. No word had been received from him.

Toward twilight Grace recovered full

consciousness. Trent was in the room at the time.

"George?" she asked. "Where is he?"

"He'll be here to-night, Grace. He knows everything, and you can't imagine how much he loves you—you and the baby."

"Poor George!" whispered the girl, and tears of weakness came to her eyes.

## XXII

TRENT tiptoed from the room. On the porch he found Janet.

"Come!" he said. "Let's go down to the river."

"Ail right, Harry!"

"Harry!" he repeated dully.

She glanced at him mischievously.

"Do you know," said Trent, "that this is the first time I have ever been called Harry?"

"The first time! Harry and Henry are the same, aren't they? Surely, when you were a boy—"

"No, I was never called anything but Henry. My father and mother—"

"They are dead?" she asked gently.

He nodded.

"I was always Henry. It sounds strange to be called Harry, but from your lips it's like the music of the spheres."

"Am I getting so fat?" laughed Janet.

"If I'm spherical, I must begin reducing!"

They reached the edge of the stream, and seated themselves on the smooth patch they had utilized earlier in the day.

"Tell me about yourself, Harry."

"I'm afraid you would find the story rather colorless. My life has been a monochrome, a sort of flat gray—how gray I am just beginning to realize."

"You're getting some color now," suggested the girl.

"Just at this time it is still a monochrome—a delicate pink, a—"

"Go on," she interrupted hastily. "Begin at the beginning."

Lightly he told her of his career in Walsingham. Janet listened with unwavering interest, occasionally laughing at his asides, but asking no questions.

"So here I am," concluded Trent, "trying to coax my health back. Not much of a story, is it?"

"Is it being coaxed?"

"Never felt better in my life."

"Yet you have hardly been resting."

"Indeed I have. Rest, you know, is

merely doing something that you haven't been in the habit of doing. An individual tired of loafing would get a most satisfactory rest with a pick and shovel. They might cause his back and arms to ache, but the part of him that needed rest would be resting. So it is with my case. I came here worn out by isolation and abstract thinking; now I am mixing with folks and dealing largely with concrete matters."

"The building business, you mean?"

"Even an atrocious pun," smiled Trent, "sounds well from your lips!"

"Please go on."

"The past few days have been a revelation. In two weeks I have learned more of the actualities of life than in my previous twenty-eight years, yet I have found that my theories of existence have stood up well against things as they really are—except in one respect. I am more convinced than ever that what the world needs most for its happiness is a well developed sense of humor. With that, instead of a vale of tears, life would be an ever smiling meadow. As it is, we devote our years to the invention of worries and apprehensions, *Frankenstein* monsters to destroy us. We have only a pitifully brief span. Why should we not cross it with equanimity?"

"Don't you believe in a hereafter?"

"Right now," said Trent, taking her fingers, "I believe only in a here. However, whether I do or not, what difference does it make? Assuming that there is a hell, and that most of us are destined for it, is there any valid reason why we should anticipate the fiery destination? As for heaven, there is obviously no reason for anxiety about that. Understand, Janet, I am not advocating a wanton pursuit of the senses, a life devoted to the satisfying of carnal craving. My scheme of life deals only with the mind. If we could all develop a sense of real values, an ability to gauge the true magnitude of our problems, the world would become a place of universal smiles. As a matter of fact, there are few situations worth a tear and none worth anticipating with a frown."

Janet shook her head.

"I'm not sure that I understand. There's Grace, for example. Now consider the troubles the poor child has been through!"

"Very well—let's look into her case. When she came here the other night through the storm, she was driven by a



wraith that she had created in her mind. Actually she was fleeing from happiness. Because she imagined that she had lost Staley's love, she brought herself close to death. As a matter of fact, his knowledge of the girl's misfortunes had only intensified his affection for her. If she had calmly considered the situation in my room that evening, instead of surrendering her mind to fear, she would never have run away, she would not have become ill, and at this moment she would be happy in the arms of the man she loves. Her mind was entirely out of focus. It was keyed to disaster. Her case is a perfect example of the point I have been trying to make—that most of our troubles are due to lack of mental poise, or of what I have been calling, perhaps narrowly, the sense of humor."

"You said a while ago," remarked Janet, "that your theories had failed in one respect. What is that?"

He looked at her so closely that her eyes wavered and dropped.

"What I meant," he explained, "was that a new situation had arisen in which, perhaps because of a lack of experience, I find myself somewhat at a loss. I have no precedents, and the matter is so vitally important that I fear—I confess it—to call upon my theories."

"Can't I help you?"

"Will you?"

"Perhaps," she laughed, "when the time comes, and if you still find yourself in need of help. Come—let's go! It's getting dark, and I'm hungry."

"So am I," said Trent, scrambling to his feet. "Shall we go into town for some dinner?"

"No, no—Mrs. Samuels expects us at the house. Do you like country cooking?"

"I could eat a mess of nails!"

The sick girl greeted them with a smile.

"To-morrow morning," Trent told her, "when you awake, George will be leaning over your bed with—"

"Are you sure," she murmured, "that he will—"

"My dear girl, the man is nearly mad with longing for you. Do you know where he has been for the last two days?"

She shook her head.

"Running around the country like a wild man, trying to get track of you. I'm quite positive that he will be in Hopetown to-night and here to-morrow morning. He wants to get married at once."

Grace gripped Trent's arm, and moisture came into her eyes.

"Oh, my sweetheart!"

"Stop that!" came a curt voice. "Do you folks want her to have a relapse? Some people haven't sense enough to wad a shotgun. You go to sleep," the old doctor added with rough gentleness. "You look fine. I'll be back in the morning."

"Won't you stay to dinner?" asked Janet.

"Like to," grunted the doctor, "but Auntie Hudson, up the road, is feeling poorly again. She's all right, of course, but there wouldn't be a thing left of my practice if I didn't encourage people like her. She ought to sleep well enough to-night," he added, pointing toward Grace, "unless you sit around debating with her. I want you to let her alone," he finished, glowering at Trent.

"All right, doctor," smiled the young man. "It's all right for me to talk with Miss Preston, isn't it?"

"I'd like to myself," retorted the physician. "Good-by. Back in the morning."

It was a happy party in Mrs. Samuels's dining room. The two women, relieved from the strain of worry, ate with good appetite; and as for Trent, he made a gormandizing spectacle of himself.

"I imagine," he remarked after a second helping of chicken, country style, "that if I boarded with you for a few weeks I'd weigh two hundred pounds!"

"It's the air," explained the hostess modestly. "You haven't seen Grace's baby, have you?"

She brought in the child—a well formed infant, with the eyes and facial contour of its mother. The only suggestion of Hope was in the shape of its nose.

After dinner Trent helped with the dishes. Then the three went out on the porch, where they could keep an eye on Grace through a window. Mrs. Samuels did a large share of the talking, dealing at length with the affairs of Auntie Hudson and other neighbors.

A boy drove up on a bicycle.

"You're Mr. Trent, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"They want you on the telephone down at the station. Uncle Joe—he's the agent—reckoned you might be here."

"Is the call from Hopetown?"

"Don't know. Uncle Joe didn't tell me. He knows all about it. He's got the num-

ber. See him write it down. He said—"The boy hesitated.

"What did he say?"

"Well, he said maybe you'd give me a quarter."

Trent laughed, and handed the boy a coin. The lad scurried away.

"Good!" exclaimed the young man. "It must be from Buck. He's back in town. I guess he's too anxious for details to wait until he gets here."

"Has he known where Grace is?"

"No. I told Mrs. Murphy this afternoon. You see, he can't get out of Hoptown before about ten o'clock." He glanced at his watch. "It's nearly eight. I'll go to town now, call up, and wait until the train gets in. We'll spend the night in Willow Springs and get here about seven in the morning."

"That's not necessary," said Mrs. Samuels. "There's a double bed in the spare room. You and he can sleep there together."

Recalling his uncomfortable night at the Springs, Trent quickly accepted the widow's invitation.

"How would you like to walk to town with me, Janet? After I call up, I'll come back with you and then go meet the train. It's a beautiful night, and the air will do you good."

The girl glanced at the widow.

*(To be concluded in the June number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

"Sure, go along," she grinned; "though it's mighty dangerous—it used to be when I was a young girl—to go walking in the moonlight with a handsome young man!"

"Don't you know," retorted Janet, "that it takes an automobile to make the combination any good nowadays?"

"Not to mention the handsome young man," added Trent.

They walked briskly to the village. A strange constraint had fallen over both, and their conversation was confined to a few scattered commonplaces. Janet waited on a bench outside the station while Trent went within to the telephone.

In five minutes he returned. His eyes were serious and his face pale.

"Janet," he said slowly, "I must go back to Hoptown at once."

"Anything wrong?"

"Yes, indeed—Arnim Hope has been murdered."

The girl sprang to her feet.

"Murdered! My God!"

"And," continued Trent, "Staley is under arrest, charged with the crime."

"Staley! Oh, poor Grace! Do you think he did it?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," Trent returned thoughtfully. "Mrs. Murphy tells me he was found in the house with a revolver. I'm afraid he killed Hope. I feared a meeting between the two!"

### THE DRIFTING YEAR

So many a May  
Have I heard singing  
Of wild birds flinging  
Their song away.

So many a June  
Watched I the going  
Of roses blowing—  
Ah, gone so soon!

So many Septembers  
Watched I the burning  
Of gold leaves turning;  
So many Decembers,

Watched I the snow  
Falling and drifting  
Sighing and sifting—  
Long, long ago!

Oliver C. Moore

# The Epic of the Shirt

A TURNING POINT IN THE CAREER OF CAREY PENDER, OF  
THE NEW YORK RECORD

By Elmer Davis

CAREY PENDER was waiting for Marcia—an occupation so new that it was still pleasantly thrilling. The cold wind of the January evening stung his cheeks as he paced up and down the Fifth Avenue sidewalk, pausing now and then to peer in through the tall windows of the bank that employed her. She was still busy, though it was long past five. He could see her golden head bent over her desk in the glow of a green-shaded lamp, beyond the mahogany railing that fenced off the bond department.

And because she was still busy, he presently found himself staring into a show window next door to the bank, with a consciousness of guilt. Over that window and the door beside it was graven a single word—the magic name of Danziger, the shirt king; and in the window was a shirt of such Oriental opulence as even Danziger had seldom produced. Reclining on a pedestal, its light brocaded silk stood out against the background of dark velvet hangings; and Pender wanted that shirt—wanted it ravenously.

But he knew, because he had asked this morning, that the shirt, with its soft attached collar, cost twenty-four dollars; that the gorgeous tie lying on its bosom—a tie whose color harmonized with the brocade of the shirt as only Danziger could arrange his effects—was seven fifty more; and that the sleeve links fitting into the scheme so perfectly were nine dollars on top of that. It couldn't be done on seventy dollars a week!

Now that he and Marcia were going to be married, even the eight-dollar silk mix shirts of his bachelor days would have to give place to humble madras. It rather frightened Pender, this realization that he would have to give up his one luxury; es-

pecially since he began to see that a good many things that looked like necessities now would have to be given up before long.

But Marcia was worth it. When she came out at last, Pender had torn himself away from the window and was waiting to take her hands with a choking, dazzled eagerness that matched her own. And presently they were careering uptown on the top of a Riverside bus, their clasped hands so warm in his overcoat pocket that they didn't mind the chill of falling night.

"Was it a long wait?" she asked.

"They're all long, when I'm waiting for you. I didn't mind, but to-night I have to be back in the office at eight. I'm on rewrite."

"What a shame!"

"I know it, but the morning newspaper business wasn't made for my convenience."

"Oh, I wish you had decent hours, Carey, like other people!"

"So do I. I've tried all the evening papers, but nothing doing. Maybe I can get a job outside."

"You'll keep on looking, won't you?" she said anxiously. "I don't want to have to sit around by myself every evening, while my husband works. If you had day hours, like other people, I could keep my place in the bank. My forty-five a week would help while we're getting started."

"Maybe I could get a job clerking in Danziger's," he suggested with feeble facetiousness. "If I can't buy his shirts, the next best thing would be selling them."

"Don't be silly, Carey!"

"I could get a job there," he assured her, with a grin that covered his longing for those magnificent silken tunics. "Carmody, our managing editor, is a great friend of Frank X. Danziger. They were boys in school together, forty years ago,

and Danziger sends Carmody a dozen shirts every Christmas. I suppose he pays his clerks about twenty-five a week."

"Oh, Carey, do be serious! If you talk that way to mother—"

"Is she so terribly down on me?" he asked uneasily.

To-night was a rather solemn occasion. Pender had dined with Marcia's widowed mother once or twice before, in their apartment on the upper West Side; and that great lady, who was Caroline Stanford Wood, the famous suffrage leader, had put him in some awe. To-night was his first interview with her since Marcia had broken the news of an engagement which must, he knew, be rather bad news to Caroline Stanford Wood. Her daughter could reasonably expect something better than a seventy-dollar-a-week reporter.

"Oh, she was nice enough about you," Marcia reassured him. "It's your business she doesn't like. I hope you can say something convincing about your prospects, and your hours. I've done my best, but she knows I'm prejudiced."

Her hand squeezed his, but he wasn't comforted. Somehow he wasn't very sure of his ability to convince the great Mrs. Wood.

Yet the formidable lady received him graciously enough. If she wasn't quite as cordial as he could have wished, at least she flattered him with an attention she had never wasted on him before. For the first time Carey felt that she had picked him out of the crowd, and was sizing him up.

Later, at the table, the sizing up process began to be uncomfortable. She developed a sudden and acute interest in his affairs, his thoughts, his interests. She asked questions. Carey had never dreamed there were so many things about which he knew nothing. It was almost a relief when Marcia looked at her wrist watch and threw him a glance of warning.

"I'm due in the office at eight," he explained, "to do rewrite. I sit at a desk, you see, with a typewriter and a telephone, and write things that the district reporters send in."

"How interesting!" said Mrs. Wood. "And how long are you on duty?"

"Till three. Oh, it isn't so bad as that every night. I do rewrite only about once a week. Some nights I have office duty till one o'clock. Sometimes I cover a dinner, or a meeting, and get off around mid-

night. Yes, I know the hours are terribly bad, Mrs. Wood. I'm trying to get into some other business."

"I do hope you'll succeed," said Marcia's mother cheerfully. "Don't let us keep you, if you must be going."

"I never used to turn up till nine," said Carey, with a grin; "but I suppose from now on I'll have to report on time. Can't afford to take chances when I'm married!"

"Young people soon learn," said Mrs. Wood, "that there are a good many things they can't afford when they're married."

It wasn't his fault that he thought of the shirt in Danziger's window.

Marcia took him to the elevator for a private farewell and a moment of consolation, which they both needed. Then she came back to face her mother.

"Well, mamma, don't you like him?"

"He's a nice boy," said her mother agreeably. "Of course, the young men of to-day are not so serious-minded as those of my generation."

"It wasn't fair of you to ask him all those questions about politics," Marcia burst out. "You know all about it, going around and lecturing so much, and Carey doesn't. In his business it's a specialty, and he's a general reporter."

"My dear child, I'm not blaming him at all. He'll probably find plenty of things to talk to you about, on the rare occasions when he's at home."

"His hours are dreadful," Marcia admitted. "From one in the afternoon to any time between midnight and dawn; but I can give up my job in the bank and keep his hours."

"Till you have children," said her mother. "Then you'll have to keep their hours."

Marcia looked blue. She wanted to have children.

"And then," her mother resumed, "there's the matter of money. I know it's ugly and stupid, but we have to think of it. How much did you say he has saved?"

"About six hundred dollars."

"You can furnish a small apartment with that, if you're economical—unless, of course, you spend it all on your honeymoon, as most young couples do. It's a pity there'll be nothing left for a rainy day; for you'll find it hard sharing seventy a week, Marcia, when you've been used to having forty-five for yourself, and your board and lodging covered outside of that."



"It's an awful complication, isn't it?" said Marcia dolorously.

Nobody would have known from her mother's face how happy that remark made her. Caroline Stanford Wood was convinced that no man was good enough for her daughter, especially no young man, and least of all a newspaper man; but because she knew her daughter, she had to attack in flank, and Carey's hours were the most vulnerable point.

"But he'll be raised before long," Marcia declared, "to eighty-five, or perhaps a hundred. His boss likes him—the managing editor, Mr. Carmody. When Carey's on late, after all the work's done, Mr. Carmody sits around and talks to him confidentially—tells him stories of the days when he was a reporter himself, on a good deal less than seventy a week. Don't you think that means something?"

"Certainly. It has its drawbacks, of course—teacher's pet usually isn't a favorite with the other boys. Moreover, that advantage will be lost if he goes into some other business. I'm afraid he likes newspaper work pretty well, Marcia. He talks as if it will be a terrible concession to give it up. It's not altogether wise to let your husband start out with the idea that he's making sacrifices for you, when it's you who are really making the sacrifices."

Marcia sighed.

"Well, he's going to keep on looking for a day job, and we won't—do anything till we see what luck he has. You don't mind our just being engaged, do you?"

Mrs. Wood knew that if she said she did mind, Marcia would blow off steam with an explosive declaration that they'd be engaged anyway.

"Of course I don't mind. The boy cares for you; it's a pity he seems so—unstable. But I think it would be very unwise, indeed, for you to marry on his present salary, or his present hours. Tell him to go on looking for that other job—and to look a little harder."

In the silence that followed, she knew that Marcia was wondering just how much effort Carey was putting into his search—how much he really wanted her.

## II

At three o'clock in the morning, when the third edition of the *Record* had gone to press, and Carey Pender was locking up his desk, the managing editor, coatless, dis-

playing a sumptuous Danziger shirt, lit his pipe and strolled over to him.

"Good story you wrote on that Harlem fire, Pender. You've got the stuff, son. Bad night to be burned out, eh, with the thermometer dropping down toward zero? And my old friend Frank X. Danziger writes me from St. Augustine that the golf is fine. He's been spending his winters there for twenty years—the lucky devil! We started side by side, Danziger and I, as boys in the old Ninth Ward; and now he winters in Florida, while I'm still a galley slave chained to the oar."

Pender suppressed a grin. He knew that Carmody, the miserable galley slave, drew a big salary, spent next to nothing, and had an uncanny sense for sound investments. He also knew that nothing but death or serious illness could keep Carmody from spending twelve hours a day in the office, seven days a week, and usually fifty-two weeks in the year. The managing editor was almost a millionaire, but he was an elderly bachelor with no taste for amusements, no hobbies, and practically no habits but work.

This morning, however, Carmody was sociable. He drew up a chair alongside Pender's desk, and sat down with a sigh.

"Ah, Pender, New York was a real town forty years ago! Even the kids could enjoy it. No automobiles, not much traffic by our standards, but good food was cheap. A poor man could afford children in those days, even in the city, and could bring them up in an apartment with some chance that they'd grow up well and strong. I don't see how these young fools have the nerve to try it now."

Pender didn't either, now that he thought it over, and the consideration made him uncomfortable. He wanted children, too.

"Danziger and I went to the same public school," the boss resumed. "Bright lot of kids we had there, too. Some big men came out of that school; and if you ask me, Danziger's the biggest of the lot. You didn't know he was the greatest authority on armor in the United States, did you? Mighty few people know that. I doubt if his wife knows it. He wrote the article on chain mail for the 'Encyclopedia Britannica.' Anything in shirts is his line—silk or steel."

"He makes some good ones," said Pender, staring enviously at the shirt the boss wore.

"Best in the world. Curious thing—he always had a wonderful feeling for color combinations. Wanted to be a painter—mighty few people know that, either. If he'd stuck to it, he might have been another Turner; but his people were poor, and couldn't afford to send him to art school. He went to work in a shirt store, and gradually his interest turned to the artistic possibilities of the shirt. You're much too young to remember what a malignant atrocity the shirt used to be in the early eighties—and more recently, for that matter. Laboring men wore flannel, and were comfortable, but anybody who pretended to be respectable had to put on one of those hard-boiled affairs—open in the back, hard cuffs that usually grew a saw-tooth edge long before the shirt was thrown away; a diamond in the bosom, if you were a regular person, or a black wooden stud if you weren't. Talk about your instruments of torture! Danziger didn't invent the soft shirt, but he made it respectable.

"I remember what was probably the first time he ever gave a thought to shirts. We were in the fifth grade, and Wilfred Van Sittart—he's Judge Van Sittart now—was with us that year. The Van Sittarts were quite a family. I forgot why Wilfred had to serve that term in public school; but he thought he was better than the rest of us, and we responded in the natural way. Well, one day Wilfred showed up at school—this kid of eleven—in a fine stiff-bosom shirt just like his father's—a beautiful new thing. Some of us made a little fun of it, as kids will—including Frank Danziger. He was wearing a nice comfortable thing of gingham, with collar attached, very plainly made by his mother; and Willy Van Sittart lost his temper and yelled something about Frank wearing the dish rag to school. Well, I wish you could have seen Frank Danziger pile into him! In no time he had Willy on his back and was pounding his face and yelling:

"'Dish rag! You'll look like a dish rag when I get through with you!'

"Of course by that time Willy's white shirt was a wreck.

"'Some day you'll be glad to have a soft shirt to wear, I guess!' Frank said, when he finally let Willy up.

"Of course, he meant it as a prophecy of dire poverty; but it came true. Last time I saw the judge he was wearing a silk shirt with soft cuffs and collar—a Danziger

shirt. Ah, well! Those were the days. Kids never have any fun any more."

Carmody knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"Yes, Danziger's gone farther than the rest of us; but I don't know that he's any better off. I'd hate to have to live with that wife of his. She's a highbrow—spends his money on art theaters, and so on; thinks he's a roughneck good for nothing but signing checks. When I look at him I feel like—what was it St. Paul said about marriage? 'I would that ye were all even as I,' or something like that—the cagy old bachelor! Good advice, Pender—especially for a newspaper man!"

"You don't think newspaper men ought to get married?"

"I don't think a morning newspaper man has a right to get married," said Carmody thoughtfully. "Isn't fair to the woman. His hours are too long, and too irregular. Also, his job demands all his attention. We ought to be a monastic order, Pender—vowed to poverty, chastity, and obedience."

"We don't need to vow ourselves to poverty," said Pender desperately. "That drops on us without being asked. How about that raise, boss? You said something last month—"

"All in good time, my boy—all in good time. Why, when I was your age I was getting eighteen dollars a week, and thought I was rich!"

"But—but you said something about liking my work—"

"Of course I like your work. You'll go a long way, Pender, if you don't trip yourself up. You've written some first-rate stories lately, and I can see that you're going to do better yet. Some day, Pender, you'll write a classic, better than anything you've ever done. You'll find just the happy combination of strong feeling and complete mastery of your material that makes a work of art. When you've done that, you'll get your raise. In the meantime, you can live on your salary. You're a bachelor."

"But I'm engaged," said Pender.

"That so?"

Nobody could have discerned, through Carmody's rather troubled surprise, the fact that he had learned this earlier in the day from Delano, the city editor, to whom Pender had told it in confidence.

"Yes, Mr. Carmody, and naturally I—

we—we'd like to get married as soon as we can."

"Well, well! After what I've just said, Pender, I may as well admit that I'm rather sorry to hear it. It isn't fair to the girl. Has she any money?"

"She's got a job of her own, but of course she'll have to give that up if I stay in this game."

"You'd better stay in this game," Carmody advised him. "You have quite a respectable talent, Pender, but it's a specialized talent. Aren't many places where you could sell it. Not fair to the woman—to say nothing of yourself, Pender. You've got a fine chance, son; but remember the old stuff—he travels the fastest who travels alone." A lot in that, Pender! Not going uptown, are you? My limousine's warmer than the subway."

"I live just down the block," said Pender gloomily.

"Well, good night. Think it over. None of my business, of course, but you've got a future—and this would be mighty hard on the girl."

### III

PENDER told the girl about it when they had dinner together on Sunday—dinner at a dairy lunch room, this time, for Caroline Stanford Wood had gone up into Massachusetts to deliver lectures, and Marcia insisted that they mustn't waste money at expensive restaurants.

"Since then," he ended, "Carmody's developed a boil on his neck. His temper's gone all to pieces—everybody stays away from him. Maybe he was just getting it that night, and that was what made him so sour; but, anyway, I didn't get my raise."

"We can live on seventy," Marcia declared. "Just watch me, Carey, how far I'll make it go!"

He looked uncertain.

"My punk little furnished room down the street here, with the use of a bath on the same floor, costs me thirty a month. Even a two-room apartment fit for you to live in couldn't be got under seventy-five."

"Well," said Marcia cheerily, "if we can't afford it, I'll move into your furnished room."

"Not if I can help it," he vowed. "It's bad enough, anyway. Such an awful lot to ask of you—"

She looked at him rather wistfully.

"Don't you want me, Carey?"

"Oh, Marcia!"

"Because I want you so much that the difference between a furnished room and an apartment on Park Avenue doesn't amount to—that!" She snapped her fingers. "Now, Carey dear, do you know what's the matter with you? You're an artist. Yes, you are. I've read your articles—stories, I mean—in the paper. I know, and everybody else will know some day. Because you're an artist, you're temperamental. You need cheering up, and that's part of my job—official cheerer-up for the family. So smile, Carey, as if you meant it. Perhaps Mr. Carmody will be in better humor to-night."

"Perhaps," said Pender; "but he won't be in the office. He's gone up to New Haven to his brother's funeral. By to-morrow he may have got somebody to lance his boil."

Pender was on office duty that night—a quiet Sunday night, with most of the married men off. When he had children—the idea made his heart trip a little faster—he supposed that he would take Sunday off, too. It was rather a pity, for Sunday was a dull day, and you might as well work as do anything else.

"Mr. Pender!"

Markle, the night city editor, was shouting at him. He reached the desk in a hurry.

"Headquarters reports a jewel robbery at Mrs. J. Wilbert Guffington's on East Seventy-Ninth Street. Hop out on it, will you? Some day maybe we can persuade the boss we ought to have a district man on the upper East Side. In the meantime, you're the goat!"

Pender didn't like to go out in the cold night, but otherwise the assignment offered no difficulties—at first. Complications began when he found Mrs. J. Wilbert Guffington's house boarded and locked, with not even a caretaker to answer his ring. The patrolman stationed in front of it had been posted there after the discovery of the robbery; he knew nothing. A private policeman supposed to oversee the interests of the block knew a little, but not much; and when Pender went to the police station, he found the desk lieutenant absolutely dumb. Evidently the headquarters flash had not been an official announcement; a police administration pounded by the newspapers was not feeding out any information about robberies.

There was one recourse left. Pender didn't like it, but he couldn't help it. He would have to hunt up the district reporters of the other papers.

Ordinarily, they were unwilling to pass on their news to men from the *Record*, and with good reason. If the *Record* didn't keep a district man on the upper East Side, it was because the *Record* thought it didn't need one—which meant that at any time the other newspapers might think the same, and their district men would be out of a job.

For their talent was far more specialized than Carey Pender's. It consisted simply in an encyclopedic knowledge of their district—a personal acquaintance with every policeman, every ambulance surgeon, every gunman, every politician; with every house and every telephone and every fire plug. For twenty or thirty years they had drawn money from their newspapers without writing a line; their one job was to gather the news of the upper East Side and telephone it in. The *Record's* indifference threatened their livelihood; and *Record* reporters who came over to ask their help on a story, were presuming too much on human nature. For the only way to insure their jobs was to see that the *Record* was frequently beaten on upper East Side news.

Carey Pender knew this, but he also knew the men, and had once or twice been able to give them ends of a story which they had missed. So, rather diffidently, he entered the one-story shack across the street from the police station, where Dolan, of the *Press*, sat beside a red-hot sheet-iron stove, while Bernstein, of the *Star*, telephoned from a booth.

"Sorry to bother you," said Pender; "but on this Guffington story—"

"You guys have got your nerve!" complained Bernstein, hanging up the receiver. "Why, it was an inside job—see? The caretaker frames it with Johnny Gioacchino—you know him—mixed up in the Hotel Hardwick racket. Binny Murphy collars the caretaker, and he squeals. Binny's taking him down to headquarters, and they picked up Johnny over on First Avenue just now. I've got it all here—saw Binny myself."

Pender took notes thankfully, and telephoned the story to Jeff McCall, on rewrite. Then he stepped back into the radius of the hot stove and lit a cigarette, just in time to hear Dolan remark to Bernstein:

"Old Frank Danziger's dead, I hear."

"You don't say! Somewhere down South, ain't he?"

"He was," said Dolan. "Don't ask me where he is now. I heard about it over at the fire house. Don't know where they got it."

"You don't say! Huh! Well, he was a great man."

"He sure was—an artist."

"Frank X. Danziger?" Pender broke in eagerly. "The shirt man?"

Dolan looked at Bernstein, and Bernstein looked at Dolan. Pender had compunctions; they were tipping him off to another story which the *Record* might have missed to-night, unless the Associated press should wire a line from St. Augustine.

"Sure," said Dolan. "That's him. Worth a good obit for the *Record*—I hear he gives Carmody his shirts."

"He is worth a good obit," Pender agreed. "Thanks a lot, you fellows. Hope I can return the favor some time."

As he set off down the street toward the Lexington Avenue subway, his heart was leaping. The combination of strong feeling and complete mastery of material that makes a work of art—he had that combination on the story of Frank X. Danziger, the boy who wanted to be a second Turner, and who was driven by poverty to discover the artistic possibilities of the shirt.

"If Carmody doesn't give me that raise to-morrow," he vowed, "I'll never write a line again!"

He didn't bother with research at the fire house. It was getting late, and if Danziger were dead the news would certainly have been telegraphed to the *Record*.

On the way to the subway station he passed Danziger's house, but, as he had expected, it was closed—closed for the winter. The private policeman on that block hadn't heard of the shirt king's death. Pender got back to the office as fast as the subway could carry him, and hurried up to the night city editor with panting eagerness.

"Frank X. Danziger's dead," he gasped. "He died at St. Augustine—just heard it up on the East Side. Who's doing obits to-night?"

"Young Mr. Willoughby, fresh from Harvard," Markle grunted. "You'd better write this. I guess you know Mr. Carmody's stories about him better than any of us. Got it confirmed?"



"I'll see if Willoughby's got the notice," said Pender. "All right—here it is!" he shouted a moment later.

"Then go to it," said Markle. "About a column for old Frank X."

Pender had only glanced at the death notice, for there was only one thing on most death notices that was of any consequence—the telephone number of the person who had sent it in, and who might be able to furnish details. This came from an advertising agency, and Pender knew enough details to fill four columns. "Died suddenly, Frank M. Danziger"—they didn't even know enough about him, thought Pender contemptuously, to get his middle initial right.

So he sat down at his typewriter and labored over the work of art that was to win his raise—labored for nearly an hour, for, like all works of art, it was a question of leaving out rather than of putting in.

Just in time to catch the edition he had his story finished. He read it over, and found it good. It was all there—the story of the schoolboy who fought to defend the reputation of the shirt his mother had made—it had come hard to leave out the name of the pompous Judge Van Sittart; the story of the young man who had had to go to work instead of to art school; who had seen the possibilities of the shirt; who had made of a garment of torture a thing of comfort and a work of art; whose interest had led him aside into such strange fields as the collecting of chain mail. It pictured Danziger as a benefactor of the race, whom a generation brought up in soft shirts and soft cuffs and soft collars should rise up and bless. It was the epic of the shirt.

Good stuff—Pender knew it! And Walter Capesden, who ran after theatrical news through the week and read copy on obituaries on Sunday nights, while the regular man was at home with his family, was the first to pronounce it good. He came down to Pender's desk, in the lull after first edition copy had gone to the composing room, with an explosive—

"Great, that Danziger obit—a classic! Got a cigarette?"

The night city editor presently saw the proof, and read it with an attention that flattered Pender, stealthily watching him from his desk behind a pillar. When Markle had finished, he passed it around the copy desk.

"There, if you want to see what real newspaper writing is!" he said.

Finally, when the first editions had come up wet from the presses, when Pender had read his story through to make sure there were no typographical errors, and had got his "good night" from Markle, there came the highest praise of all. He went down in the elevator with Sedlitz, the dramatic critic, who peered over his black-rimmed pince-nez and asked:

"Did you write the Danziger obit? Very good, Pender—very good! I might have done it myself."

As they went out, they were almost knocked over by the boy bringing in the first editions of the other morning newspapers. Pender grinned as he thought of the bare, lifeless chronicles their Danziger obits must be; but he would postpone until morning the pleasant task of realizing his superiority. He would go home, and go to sleep, and dream of the raise that Carmody could hardly refuse him now.

#### IV

HE slept long and dreamlessly, favored by having a room on the court, away from the street noises, and by the fact that he had chosen a house without a telephone, where no city editor could call him for an early assignment at an unseemly hour. It was past noon when he got out into the street, picked up an armful of newspapers to read, as was his custom, at the breakfast table, and walked across to the Claridge for his grapefruit, coffee, and rolls. Since he and Marcia became engaged he had been breakfasting at a lunch counter, but to-day he was so sure of his raise that he felt he could safely indulge himself.

Breakfast had been eaten, and he had settled back with a cigarette, before he opened the *Chronicle* and looked at the obituary page. They had missed the Danziger obit altogether; he had a real beat. This was better luck than he had hoped for!

Such good luck, in fact, that he grew uneasy. He looked over that *Chronicle* page again, and then a familiar name drew and fixed his attention. Down in the corner, under an unobtrusive one-line head, he read:

Frank M. Danziger, proprietor of a delicatessen store on East Eighty-Sixth Street, died suddenly yesterday at Augusta, Georgia, where he was spending the winter. He was well known on the

upper East Side, and leaves a wife and two daughters.

Frantically he tore open the third edition of the *Record* and fumbled for the obituary page. His column-long classic had vanished, its place being taken by quotations from the Sunday sermons. Far down in the column of humble obituary notes, product of the unconsidered Willoughby of Harvard, he found what he had seen in the *Chronicle*, word for word. Evidently young Willoughby, called on to cover for the third edition, hadn't even taken the trouble to rewrite the *Chronicle's* item.

Only one thing more. Pender looked at the adjoining column of paid death notices, hunting for the one he had glanced at last night—only glanced at, before handing it back to the messenger boy from the business office. There it was:

DIED—Suddenly, Frank M. Danziger, beloved husband of Emily Danziger, father of Bernice Danziger and Sadie Danziger Hillman. Services at his late home, 330 East Eighty-Second Street, Tuesday, at 10.30 A.M.

Frank X. Danziger's wife had been Celia Trafford, and he was childless.

Pender paid his check, and walked over to the office with the gay enthusiasm of an inmate of Sing Sing on his way to the electric chair. They were waiting for him. Delano, the city editor, spied him as he came in the door, and shouted:

"Pender, come here!"

Delano's face told nothing of his feelings—it never did; but Pender's face told Delano that he knew all.

"Well?" said Delano. "You've played hell, you have! Burying the wrong man's a serious matter at any time, but when it's the boss's best friend—well, Mr. Carmody will have to pay cash for his shirts after this. Pender, you're going to be fired. Now shall I do it quick and painlessly, or do you want to wait till the boss brings his boil in and does it right?"

"I'll wait for him," said Pender cheerlessly. "Might as well take my medicine."

Deep down in his heart there was the hope that he might yet be saved. Carmody liked him, and Carmody knew a well-written story when he saw one. In those two facts lay a possibility that his offense might be condoned.

"Suit yourself," said Delano. "How did you come to pull this boner?"

"I was on the East Side," Pender explained, "on that Guffington story. The district men up there said old Danziger was dead, and there was only one Danziger I'd ever heard of. I asked them if it was Frank X., and they said it was."

"Don't doubt it," said Delano. "That bunch doesn't love the *Record*. If they gave you the Guffington story, they probably figured they'd done enough for one night."

"But they were talking about this Danziger," Pender persisted, "before I made my break. They said he was an artist—a great man."

"And he was," Delano agreed, "from their viewpoint. Artist is no name for it. He could charge five dollars more for a ham than anybody else in town, and get away with it. He could sell Saratoga chips that were put up before the Civil War, and make his hard-boiled customers think they were good and fresh. I used to know him. Nobody ever heard of him south of Seventy-Second Street or west of the park, but he was a great man up in Yorkville. This is a big town, Pender, and lots of people in it. Remember that in your next job!"

Further comments were cut off by the cyclonic entrance of John F. Carmody and his boil. He threw his overcoat on his desk, looked around with a furious glare, and then spied Pender.

"Ah, young man! What have you got to say for yourself, eh? I had a two-hundred-word telegram from Danziger at my apartment just now. He's had a dozen queries by wire about this story already. He says he isn't dead—that, and other things. How the devil did you do it? Quick now—speak up! Didn't you read the death notice?"

"I—I read the top line," Pender confessed, "and I thought they'd got the initial wrong."

"You thought!" Carmody's arm called high heaven to witness the futility of this excuse. "Mr. Delano, did you hear what the young men of this generation call thought? Thought! Pender, you—never mind, I don't want to be harsh on you. Get out! Never let me see you again! You thought!"

"But, Mr. Carmody, if you read that story—"

"Of course I read that story. So has everybody in town. Danziger will never

hear the last of it. Now I know what you're going to say—you're going to say it's a good story. It is. Only one thing wrong with it. Let me give you some advice, son. Don't go to some other paper and look for a job. You may get it, but you'll never hold it. A man who hasn't got sense enough to read below the top line in a four-line death notice had better get out of the newspaper business quick, and stay out. You aren't thorough, and you haven't any gumption. Go get a job on a soda fountain. Now get out. Mr. Herbst!"

Carmody's scared secretary came running up with his notebook and fountain pen ready.

"Take a telegram," said Carmody. "'Frank X. Danziger, Hotel Ponce de Leon, St. Augustine, Florida. Inexpressibly grieved and mortified by our inexcusable mistake. Have fired the young fool who wrote it.'"

He paused, and cast a fiery glance around the city room; but Pender was vanishing through the outer door.

Automatically, he turned toward Marcia. He needed cheering up, now; and she would be coming out for lunch in a few minutes. What he would say to her he didn't know, or how he could look her in the face; but he needed Marcia, and instinctively he went to her. His face was a warning of disaster, and one look at him, when she came out to find him waiting on the curb, braced her to stand a shock.

He told her about it, in all its grievous detail, over a cup of coffee and a sandwich in a lunch room around the corner. More need than ever for economy now; but when he had finished, Marcia startled him with a smile.

"Well, that's something to the good, Carey! I know, dear, you hated to leave the newspaper business—hated to leave the *Record*; and now you can go out and get a day job without any qualms."

"Maybe so," he admitted without enthusiasm; "but I don't know just what to do. Nobody needs press agents now, I gather, and I haven't had experience that would fit me for anything else. I'll try my hardest, Marcia; only—"

"Only what?"

"Only I don't think it's fair to keep you tied down, when I've lost my job. I—I can hardly ask you to go on being engaged to me now."

"Of course you can't," said Marcia cheerily, with a glance at her wrist watch. "It's twenty past one. Hurry up and pay your check, and then we'll go downtown to the City Hall and get a marriage license. I'll be a little late getting back to the office, but I can fix it with Miss Underhill."

"Oh, Marcia, I can't—"

"Can't you? Mother's coming home on Friday, Carey. If she hears you've lost your job, she'll want me to break the engagement; and if I don't do it she'll make me miserable. But if we're married there's nothing she can do except swallow it or cut us off without argument. I could stand that better than having her always after me; for she's been pretty good to me, Carey, and her reproaches would hurt. We shall have to live in your furnished room for the present; but when you've got a job—a day job—and we're prosperous—why, we'll see about an apartment."

"Live on your money, Marcia! I couldn't do it!"

"It would be living on our money," said Marcia. "Better live on the forty-five a week that happens to be brought in by the one who has a job, than break into your bank account."

Carey Pender's clenched fist hit the table so hard that his coffee cup turned over.

"We'll do it! And if I can't get a job for you, you beautiful golden-haired angel from Paradise—well, if I haven't got a real job by the end of this week, I'll get ready to swing a pick or heave packing cases. Now let's hurry, before we recover our senses!"

## V

IN the living room of his hotel apartment, Frank X. Danziger sat looking out at a cluster of royal palms. He was looking at the palms in order to keep from looking at his wife; for he was angry enough without that.

"In Heaven's name, Celia, how much more money are you going to spend on this bunch of ham actors?"

"If you choose to insult my friends as well as me," said the cold voice of the woman he had married in hot eagerness thirty years ago, "I suppose I must submit; but I should think that even if you haven't any feeling for art yourself, you'd be willing to admit that other people can appreciate things that are above the obvious commercial profits of the moment."

"Maybe so," said Danziger, more calmly. "Maybe so. Still, you'll admit that Bill Shakespeare, for instance, was something of an artist. So far as I can remember, he didn't need an angel or a committee of guarantors to finance his plays. He got his out of the box office!"

His wife's reply told him that, as usual, he had made a tactical mistake. He had given her a chance to change ground.

"Box office! That seems to be the only standard of success you can understand."

"It's the only standard that seems to work, so far as my observation has gone. Seems to me, Celia, that if art's any good it will pay its own way. Everything else has to."

"You saw what Mr. Sedlitz said about our art theater, didn't you, in the *Record*?"

"Oh, I know," he admitted, "you believe what you see in the *Record* just as firmly as your Puritan ancestors believed what they saw in the Bible. I'm surprised you still talk to me, after the *Record* reported me dead. Sedlitz may be right; I don't say he isn't. All I say is that everything else has to stand on its own feet. If I couldn't pay my way down at the store, could I find somebody else to put up the money? Not me! Why coddle art? They didn't have to in Shakespeare's day."

"Oh, the store! That's all you think of. When I married you, I knew there were terrible differences between us—background and education and outlook and social standing—"

"And money," he inserted grimly, for the Traffords had been politely destitute when Celia married the rising young shirt merchant.

"I thought we could overcome them. I thought I could mold you; but I never can make you understand—and I've tried so hard, Frank! Money, money, money—"

A knock at the door came as a welcome interruption, and a colored bell boy entered with a newspaper done up in a brown wrapper. Danziger reached for it, then fell back, out of long habit. It was a tradition in their family that Celia read the *Record* first.

Lighting a cigar, he watched her with a great weariness. He could have wished that the report of his death had been true. Anything rather than these interminable wrangles that constantly grew more bitter! They might start over money, but that wasn't the real reason. It was the differ-

ence of their ideals, their temperaments, that had existed from the first, that they had never known how to bridge.

And the tragedy of it was that he was still fond of her, and he knew that she was still fond of him; but some dark inner compulsion drove them to strike each other on the most vulnerable spots, to wound each other's most sensitive nerves.

Celia was looking up at him with a new and strange expression—something almost like respect.

"Is—is this true, Frank?"

"What?"

"What the *Record* said about you, when they thought you were dead. Why have you never told me these things?"

"What things?" asked Frank X. Danziger, running back hastily over several phases of his life on which Celia was not informed.

She handed him the newspaper, and he read Carey Pender's obit—the epic of the shirt, the epic of Frank X. Danziger, humanizer and virtual creator of the shirt; the story of the boy who had fought for the honor of the shirt his mother had made; the boy who might have been a second Turner, but who had gone into a shirt store because his family couldn't afford to send him to art school; who had turned his sense of color into his business, and had made of the shirt a work of art.

He read it through twice, and when he had finished he looked over his glasses at his wife.

"Why have I never told you? Well, maybe because you never asked me. You thought the store was just a way of making money. You didn't seem to see anything else in it. And when I dropped hints that art ought to pay its own way, you—"

"Oh, Frank! I—I suppose I've been living with an artist all my life, and never knew it. Thirty years, Frank! What we've missed!"

A little later, just after he had written out another check for her art theater, he looked up thoughtfully.

"Wonder who the devil wrote that!" he said. "Carmody would know. He said he'd fired the man. Celia, will you reach me that pad of telegraph blanks?"

## VI

THE cold January night had closed in, and a cold, dry snow was falling, blown before the wind, when Carey Pender came



back to his furnished room from his third day of futile job-hunting. Somehow there didn't seem to be much demand for bright young men whose only experience had been in the newspaper business, whose only talent was for artistic writing. Yesterday and the day before he had come home with the comforting conviction that Marcia would cheer him up, as she had; but this afternoon Pender had been thinking things over, and he had come to the conclusion that it was about time for him to do a little cheering. He mustn't let Marcia carry all the load. It was unfortunate that he didn't have some bit of encouraging news to tell her to-night, but he would have to do the best he could.

So he came into the stuffy, dark little room, and found his wife lying full length across the dingy counterpane of the cheap brass bed. She sat up very suddenly as he came in; but when he turned on the light he saw that her eyes were pink and swollen.

In a moment he was by her side, caressing her, telling her that it didn't matter, that nothing mattered now that they were together. She clung to him with a desperate weariness that told him he hadn't come too soon.

"Any—news?" she sniffed presently. "I mean, any good news?"

"Not yet, but I'll have it pretty soon, Marcia. Anyway, I'm young and strong. I can swing a pick—and I'd love to do it, too, for you!"

"I didn't mean to be a fool," she sobbed. "I do love you, Carey, and I know you'll get a job, and everything; but mamma's coming home to-morrow."

"We'll convince her," he vowed, without the slightest idea as to how it could be done. "Why, you wonderful little girl, if I couldn't make you happy—"

"You do make me happy," said Marcia; "happier than I've ever been in my life. I—I was just tired and blue, I guess; but—"

"We'll fix your mother," he promised with reassuring vagueness. "Now, honey, fix yourself up, and we'll go out for a sumptuous banquet at Childs's."

A knock interrupted him, and he opened the door on the colored maid. She handed him a telegram.

"What the dickens?" he muttered, giving the girl his last dime.

"I know it's from mamma," said Marcia despairingly. "She must have got my

letter, and she'll never speak to me again. She has an awfully strong will. Oh, Carey, you're all I've got now!"

He encircled her with one arm as he tore open the telegram.

"All you've got, am I? Well, Marcia, I'll do my best—"

Then he fell into an awed silence, which lasted until she took the telegram away from him and read it.

I was the first man on earth to appreciate artistic side of shirt business, and you are the second. No use our competing with each other. Have long needed executive assistant with special attention to publicity. Job worth ten thousand a year to start, but more later on, if arrangement proves satisfactory. If idea appeals to you, come St. Augustine immediately at my expense and talk it over. Think together we would be unbeatable team. Wire answer.

FRANK X. DANZIGER.

Pender suddenly came to life.

"Marcia, pack your suit case! If I remember, there's a train for Jacksonville at half past eight."

"But—but he only says *your* expenses will be paid," Marcia protested.

"Haven't we got six hundred in the bank?" her husband demanded. "And weren't we going to take our honeymoon expenses out of that?"

## VII

ONE year later Frank X. Danziger came into the private office of his executive assistant—a room paneled and decorated in colors that blended as perfectly as the hues of a Danziger shirt. Pender, behind his big, flat-topped mahogany desk, rose and gestured toward a soft leather armchair. Danziger sat down and looked intently at the younger man.

"Well, Pender, your first year's about up; and you've done mighty well—better than I expected. Got to make a new contract. How will five years do, this time—at, say, fifteen thousand a year? You can use it, now that you have a son."

"It will do," said Pender.

"I'm going to change the organization of the business," said Danziger. "I've been running it all by myself for thirty years. Too much work. Going to incorporate. I'll make the capitalization small—say a thousand shares, par value a hundred dollars. At that rate they'll pay annual dividends of eighty per cent. Give you twenty-five shares as a bonus and make you vice president; and if you keep on as

well as you've done this year, there'll be a stock bonus every Christmas. I'm getting along, Pender. In about six or eight years I'll be ready to sell out—provided I can sell to somebody who knows the business, and has an interest in it, and works at it the way he'd work at an art. For a man like that I'd make the terms so easy that he could pay for it out of the profits and have plenty left to live on. And, you lucky young rascal, when you're ready to quit you can pass the business on to your son!"

"You're very good, Mr. Danziger."

"Not a bit. You've come along in time to save me from working myself to a premature grave. Curious, isn't it, that I'd never have heard of you if you hadn't put me in a premature grave? On the level, now, Pender, where did you get that dope you wrote about me?"

"Where did I get it? Why, from Mr. Carmody. He used to tell me stories of your boyhood—yours and his—when we

sat around the office after the paper had been put to bed."

Danziger grinned.

"Johnny Carmody's wasted on the newspaper business," he observed. "He ought to write for the movies. All bunk, Pender! I do know a little bit about armor. I had to take it up—had to take something up, to keep my wife from wishing her actor friends on me. I've often wanted to punch Judge Van Sittart, in the course of the past forty years; but I never did. Carmody must have dreamed that. I never had any idea of being a painter. He must have dreamed that, too. We old fellows get a little forgetful, when we run back to those early years. A second Turner! Why, Pender, I went into the shirt store after long hesitation. I wanted to drive a truck, but they said I was too light to manage a team. All bunk! You can tell Carmody so, next time you see him; but don't tell my wife!"

#### SICILIAN LOVE

BROTHER, be kind to her;  
There is a register  
Within my heart of each long golden hair  
Upon her head!  
If one be lost,  
To your last heartbeat you shall pay the cost;  
You shall be fed with anguish and alarms,  
And learn to fear the glory in your arms,  
And little snakes of doubt shall haunt your bed.

Nothing is yours that was not mine before,  
And never can be yours as it was mine,  
And shall be mine, sad brother, forevermore.  
There has been given you the loveliest clay  
Molded since Greece,  
The reddest roses and the whitest snow,  
And in her delicate veins the wildest wine.  
Unseen, my eyes are on you night and day;  
But cherish her, and I will guard your peace.

So she be happy, I am happy too;  
But fail—there is no land shall shelter you  
From the avenging footstep of my hate;  
Though long delayed, the certain sudden fate,  
With far-flung singing dart,  
Shall still your paltry life,  
Even in the bosom of your stolen wife,  
And daggers laugh for joy deep in your heart!

*Florio Costa*

# Mr. Wyckington's Gladstone

A TRAGEDY OF BIG BUSINESS—THE DISASTROUS SUCCESS OF  
A MILLIONAIRE MANUFACTURER OF HOUSEHOLD CEMENT

By Ellis Parker Butler

I REMEMBER reading in a magazine, not long ago, an article by Mr. Wyckington, telling how he had proceeded to become the owner of his great chain of stores—seven thousand six hundred and eighty-two of them—and the largest purchaser of certain articles the world has yet known. I believe he said in that article that he had built up the chain by simple honesty and patient attention to detail; but I think he was too modest. Men who amass millions, as Mr. Wyckington has, are usually something more than simply honest and patiently attentive to details. Had I written the article I would have said:

Henry Wyckington is a success because of two things—he has the quickest mind of any man I have ever known, and he has a wife.

I know Mrs. Wyckington. Some people would call her severe. It might be just to call her severe, but I think it would be more exact to call her justly stern. She knows what is right, and she demands it. Being so just and so stern may have made her a little hard, but she is a noble woman in many respects, and I am sure Mr. Wyckington owes her much.

Without having been told so, I believe that Mrs. Wyckington, when she was Sarah Wack and first met Mr. Wyckington, plotted her life into three periods. The first period was to be the time during which she would allow Mr. Wyckington to imagine he was courting her; the second period was to be the time during which she allowed Mr. Wyckington to enjoy the honeymoon; and the third period was the time for Mr. Wyckington to stop nonsense and become successful and wealthy. This program she carried out exactly.

Mr. Wyckington was an exceedingly

brilliant man, but he had been altogether too gay in his youth, and he needed Mrs. Wyckington to put a stop to such nonsense. She banished all his old companions, canceled all his old habits, and made him proprietor of the celebrated Wyckington chain of stores.

Of course, this could not have been accomplished without his genius. In a way, he was a Napoleon. His rapidly made decisions amazed his fellow business men, as when, in an instant, he bought the three thousand Overton-Grush stores. He was the most rapid and correct thinker I have ever known. That is how I came to marry his daughter—he thought rapidly.

## II

EMILY WYCKINGTON was a charming girl. I thought so, as you can imagine when I say that I was madly in love with her. Emily liked me well enough to try me as a husband for the remainder of our lives; but Mr. Wyckington did not like me at all. He disliked me exceedingly. It was not that I was impossible in any way, but that I had done a thing he never forgave in any employee—I had resigned my position for a reason which he did not think sufficient.

Mr. Wyckington believed he was the greatest business man in the world—as he is, no doubt. He also believed that the young man who was permitted to hold a position in the headquarters of the Wyckington Company was the most fortunate young man on earth. I had such a position, and I was on excellent terms with Mr. Wyckington and his wife, when I made the mistake of tendering my resignation.

Mr. Wyckington permitted me to go, but he did so more or less in the manner of a mad bull permitting a tramp in a red

sweater to depart from a pasture. Weeks later I would awake in the middle of the night, trembling, and thinking that I still heard the roar of rage Mr. Wyckington uttered when I told him I had invented a patent cement and wished to resign my job in order to put the cement on the market.

Dear Emily wrote me a sweet letter, spotted with tears. She told me that she was heartbroken, but that now it could never, never be.

"Mother," she wrote, "is grimly neutral, but father will never forgive you. Farewell, my dearest own, forever!"

### III

I WAS broken-hearted, too, of course, but a man cannot work with Henry Wyckington for several years without imbibing something of the "conquer or die" spirit that Mrs. Wyckington has given the great chain-store man. Although my spirit was, so to speak, crushed by my loss of dear Emily, I went to work briskly on my task of preparing a factory and getting my cement on the market.

I had a cement I believed to be the best in the world, and one that could be sold for ten cents a bottle—small or trial size. It would mend cloth, leather, china, rubber, glass, and, in fact, any substance that could be cut or torn, and it was quick-drying. I called it, using my own name, "Bimple's Household Cement."

Now and then I had a glimpse of Emily. During the time when my factory was being fitted up and my bottles were being made, I had glimpses of Emily at restaurants and hotels. We chanced to meet in such places quite a number of times. A mutual friend, a Miss Diddicks, was quite useful in helping us to chance upon these chances. I would telephone to Miss Diddicks, and Emily would telephone to her, and in that way the meetings came to pass.

Dear Emily, despite her certainty that we were parted forever, did what she could to overcome her father's firm determination that I should never be his son-in-law. I believe she made his evenings quite miserable, sitting on the arm of his chair and coaxing him to buy Bimple's Household Cement. You will understand why she thus tried to be my sales agent when I explain that Mr. Wyckington had called me an ineffective little snip of a puppy, and had said that I would never amount to a row of rusty pins.

"No!" he had shouted at Emily. "No! I'll never let you marry that miserable little wretch. He's no good! He'll never make a living with his silly cement. He'll starve. Let him go ahead and show that he's a business man, if he wants to marry a daughter of mine. Let him show that he can sell cement by the ton. Let him show he can keep a big factory going. Then I'll think differently—and not till then!"

You can easily understand, then, what it would mean for me to get the ten-cent bottled cement business of the seven thousand six hundred and eighty-two Wyckington chain stores. With a minimum sale of—say—fifty bottles a day for each store, with three hundred business days a year, and with seven thousand six hundred and eighty-two stores, Wyckington could sell more than one hundred million bottles of my cement each year. It would make me. If Wyckington bought my cement, I would be a successful manufacturer, and Mr. Wyckington would allow Emily to be mine.

"Has he ordered?" I asked dear Emily every time we met.

"No, and he is not going to," she would say.

"Well, you might as well give him another card when you see him," I would tell her, and I would hand her one of my business cards.

Dear Emily! She would tuck the card in her bead purse and hand it to her father when she saw him that evening.

### IV

WHEN Mr. Wyckington kicked me across the hall, I felt some resentment.

Perhaps I should explain that I had gone to Chicago to attend the eighteenth annual convention of an organization known as the Small Goods Dealers of America. The annual convention is the great affair of the year. I knew that all the other ten-cent cement manufacturers would be represented there, and that it was well for me to be present. In fact, it was not to be considered for a moment that I could be absent.

Fortunately Mr. Wyckington attended the convention. I went West on the same train, and from time to time I walked forward from my sleeper to his and spoke of Bimple's Household Cement in my most convincing manner. He seemed to grow more and more angry each time I spoke to him, and I understand that he finally of-



ferred the colored porter one hundred dollars to throw me out of the car every time I entered it. So the porter told me.

"He say he goin' give me one hundred dollars if'n I frow you out'n the car, an' he goin' give me two hundred if'n I frow you off'n the train," the porter said.

So I remained in my own car; for the porter explained that he was a poor man and needed the money.

I did, however, venture to speak to Mr. Wyckington as he got off the car at the station in Chicago. He became very angry, and, raising his Gladstone bag high above his head, he threw it at me. I dodged, and the bag hit a locomotive that stood three tracks over. A red-cap porter ran to retrieve it, and I climbed between two trucks of trunks and escaped.

During the convention I tried to approach Mr. Wyckington a number of times, but was unable to do so, as he always saw me first. He seemed, too, to have a sort of bodyguard of other dealers in small goods constantly around him. Of this group I heard some rumors during the convention, and I was told that several little supper parties had been held in their honor by manufacturers of small articles.

One or two of these parties, I understood, had been quite like those that Mr. Wyckington had enjoyed in his young days, before he met Sarah Wack. I heard that more than one had lasted well into the early morning hours, with illicit liquor and several chorus ladies not averse to dancing on a table.

I was surprised that a man like Mr. Wyckington should take part in such affairs, but I hoped he did so merely to avoid offending his fellows. I still hope so. I have no doubt that that was why Mr. Wyckington permitted himself to attend the suppers, and accepted from one of the chorus ladies a satin slipper out of which he, or she, or both, or some other parties, had drunk a libation of champagne—if it was champagne.

This last supper took place on the closing night of the convention. Early the next morning I was at Mr. Wyckington's door in the hotel, tapping on it. He opened the door, and I saw that he was not quite fully dressed, although he had on his shirt and trousers as well as his shoes.

He turned toward me as I entered. He was packing his Gladstone bag, which stood on his table, and he had in his hand a small

blue satin slipper, still damp with liquid (query—champagne?), which he still held as I thrust toward him one of my circulars and price lists. He did not kick me across the hall until I had thrust the circular into the blue satin slipper.

## V

MR. WYCKINGTON wears, fastened to a suspender button, a gold chain, and on the end of the gold chain is his bunch of keys. He is one of the men who lock things. He locks his desk, locks his automobile, and even locks his Gladstone bag when he travels.

Mr. Wyckington reached New York at half past nine o'clock on Monday morning, and took a cab to his home. He hurried to his room, after greeting Mrs. Wyckington, disrobed, and went into the bathroom.

Mrs. Wyckington, who was always a careful housekeeper, went upstairs almost immediately after Mr. Wyckington, and entered the bedroom. She saw Mr. Wyckington's Gladstone bag on the floor, and it occurred to her that she had just about time to get his soiled clothes to the laundry, if she made haste. She saw his trousers lying on the bed; so she disengaged the gold chain, took the keys, and, with the proper key, unlocked the bag.

Immediately she saw the blue satin slipper and recognized the wine stains for what they were.

"Well, really! Indeed!" she said to the room.

Her face took on that hard expression that had so greatly helped Mr. Wyckington toward success in business life. She seated herself and waited her husband's return from the bath.

Mr. Wyckington entered the bedroom humming a gay little tune that clung in his mind from the night of the supper. He was clad in a bathrobe and bath slippers, and was holding the bathrobe around him with one hand.

"Tum de dumdy; tum de dumdy; tum de dumdy dum!" Mr. Wyckington was humming.

As he entered, he saw at one glance Mrs. Wyckington's face and the blue satin slipper on top of his belongings in the Gladstone bag. He did not stop humming.

"Tum de dumdy; tum de dumdy—" he hummed, and walked to his dresser.

Mrs. Wyckington watched him as a cat watches a mouse.

"Hello!" Mr. Wyckington said carelessly. "Where are my brushes? Oh, not unpacked yet, of course!"

He meant his military hairbrushes, for he always gave his hair a brisk brushing after a shower. They were not on his dresser, because they were in his Gladstone bag.

He turned toward the bag. With a puzzled frown, he picked up the blue satin slipper and looked at it, turning it over and over in his hand as he did so. He looked at Mrs. Wyckington inquiringly.

"Well, Sarah!" he demanded severely. "What is the meaning of this?"

"That," said Mrs. Wyckington with equal severity, "is just what I am waiting for you to explain, Henry Wyckington!"

"I mean this—this slipper, or whatever you may call it," said Mr. Wyckington. "What, may I ask, is your idea in putting it into my Gladstone bag, Mrs. Wyckington? If I have told you once I have told you one hundred times that I mean to have nothing to do with that young fozzle of a Bimple, or with his cement."

"Henry—" Mrs. Wyckington began.

He cut her short. He appeared to be tremendously angry.

"A hundred times? No—a thousand times I have told both you and Emily I want nothing to do with Bimple!" he almost shouted. "I don't want his cement. I don't want him as a son-in-law. I don't know what insane idea of advertising this blue satin thing embodies, and I don't care; but I am more than a little surprised and hurt, Sarah, that you should let him use you to force his infernal cement upon my notice by—"

"Henry," cried Mrs. Wyckington, "I am calm now, but in a moment I may lose control of myself. I am waiting to hear how that slipper got into your—"

"His infernal cement!" repeated Mr. Wyckington scornfully. He drew my circular and price list from the slipper and shook them at Mrs. Wyckington. "Don't you come working any game on me, Sarah! *You* may think the young pup is some good, and *you* may think his cement is some good, and *you* may think you are smart in foisting his advertising matter upon me, but I don't! No—not one single one of the three! I think he is no good, and I think his cement is no good, and I think you are going too far when you—"

"Henry," said Mrs. Wyckington, and an ugly light blazed in her eyes, "I did not put that slipper in your Gladstone, and you know it! I am waiting for you to tell me how it came there."

Mr. Wyckington let his mouth fall open in well simulated amazement. For a full moment he stared at Mrs. Wyckington without speaking.

"You did *not* put this slipper in my Gladstone?" he finally asked, turning the slipper over and over in his hands and examining it with minute care. "You say you did not, Sarah? Then, please, how did it come there?"

"That," said Mrs. Wyckington, "is what I am waiting to hear."

And it was entirely evident that she was.

Mr. Wyckington creased his brow. He looked from the slipper to his wife, from his wife to the Gladstone bag, from the Gladstone to my circular and price list.

"My dear Sarah!" he exclaimed. "My dear girl! If I have unjustly accused you, I am sorry—sorry, indeed! I must be getting forgetful. I thought I left my Gladstone locked when I went to the bath, but I must have unlocked it before I went. No doubt one of the servants, bribed by that jackanapes of a Bimple, or Emily, came in and put this slipper into it."

"Henry," said Mrs. Wyckington sternly, "I unlocked your Gladstone. You carried it into the house and up here to this room. A moment after you left the room I entered, took your keys, and unlocked the bag. I found that—that blue object—that slipper—inside. I am waiting to hear how it got there, and what it means. I am waiting!"

"Amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Wyckington. "Amazing! I should never have believed it!"

He did a most remarkable thing. He got down on his knees and looked at the exterior of his Gladstone bag. He turned the bag around and around, with his face close to it.

"Most amazing!" he exclaimed. "Most surprising!"

"I am inclined to think so myself," said Mrs. Wyckington meaningly. "A man of your age!"

"I am amazed!" said Mr. Wyckington. "I am dumfounded!"

He arose and lifted the Gladstone bag, dumping its contents recklessly on the bed. He put his face into the bag and looked at

its interior. He felt the interior carefully, rubbing his hand along the soft, smooth leather.

Quite suddenly he seated himself on the bed and looked at Mrs. Wyckington with a smile.

"Well, I admit, Sarah," he said pleasantly, "that this puts an entirely different face on the matter!"

"I hope," said Mrs. Wyckington, "that something puts a better face on it!"

"But this is marvelous," said Mr. Wyckington. "This changes the whole aspect of the affair. This shows that there is indeed something in young Bimple." He laughed. "Quite a different aspect!" he said genially.

Mr. Wyckington arose and walked toward the desk telephone at the far side of the room.

"I am still waiting, Henry," said Mrs. Wyckington coldly.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Wyckington. "Just a minute, dear. I act quickly when I do act—you know that, Sarah. Just hand me that circular—that Bimple Household Cement circular. It has Bimple's telephone number on it, I believe."

"And what, may I ask," queried Mrs. Wyckington, still coldly, "has Mr. Bimple to do with this blue satin affair, Henry Wyckington?"

"Why, my dear Sarah!" cried Mr. Wyckington, crossing the room, picking up the Gladstone bag, and dropping it in her lap. "I thought you would understand that. The young rascal was on the train with me—coming back from Chicago, I mean. He bothered the life out of me, Sarah, with his cement. 'Only a trial order,' he begged, and 'Try just a gross or two, Mr. Wyckington, please!' I was short enough in my replies to him, you may believe, Sarah."

"I am listening," said Mrs. Wyckington. "I hope you will say something soon."

"I am saying it," declared Mr. Wyckington cheerfully. "He kept at me most insistently. 'Excellent cement—superior to any—mends leather magically—dries instantly.' An annoyingly persistent young man, Sarah! 'Get away from me,' I said. Then he was at me again. 'I'll prove my cement is the best in the world. I'll prove it can mend leather, drying instantly. Watch for a blue satin slipper,' he said. I thought he was mad."

"I think some one is mad," said Mrs. Wyckington, and still she did not smile.

"Ha, ha! Good!" laughed Mr. Wyckington. "Some one is mad! You mean I am, because young Bimple put one over on me; but, no, Sarah! No, I'm not angry; I'm amused. Clever fellow! I appreciate cleverness. I appreciate good cement. I appreciate up-to-the-minute business-getting methods. 'A blue satin slipper,' he said, and I had not the least idea what he meant. 'Watch for a blue satin slipper, Mr. Wyckington, and remember that Bimple's Household Cement mends leather perfectly and dries instantly.' And you see, Sarah?"

"I certainly do not see," declared Mrs. Wyckington.

"Why," said Mr. Wyckington, throwing his arms wide, "he waited until I went to the dining car, and then he pulled my Gladstone—my locked Gladstone—from under my seat and slit it open. He slit it open, Sarah, and pushed this slipper and his circular and price list into the bag, smeared his cement on the wound, pressed the edges of the cut together, and they healed instantly. Look at my Gladstone, Sarah! Do you see a scar? Can you see even so much as a scratch?"

Mrs. Wyckington examined the bag carefully.

"I cannot," she said.

"And do you wonder I say 'amazing' and 'wonderful'?" asked Mr. Wyckington with enthusiasm. "Why, my dear, I have never known such a cement in my whole career as a small goods merchant—never! The young man has a fortune in that cement. It is the most marvelous, miraculous, stupendous cement on the—wait!"

He crossed to the telephone and called my office number loudly.

"Bimple?" he shouted. "Is that Bimple? My dear young man, this is Wyckington—Henry Wyckington. Yes, and I want to say you certainly did prove that your cement is all you claim for it. Yes, I found your circular and the blue satin slipper in my Gladstone bag, where you put them when you so cleverly slit the bag open and then cemented it shut again with your cement. Clever work, Bimple, and a marvelous article of cement! The Wyckington stores must have your cement, Bimple. We can't do without it. Please enter my order for one million gross, immediate delivery!"

I admit I was astounded. Such an order I had never hoped to receive. In an instant I saw myself on the road to vast fortune, and ere long to be the happy husband of my dearest Emily. I stammered my thanks, hung up the receiver, and turned to see my dear, dear, darling Emily standing in my office doorway.

I opened my arms and she came into them.

## VI

It was not for a full minute that I noticed that the telephone bell was ringing. When I had taken my arms from around dear Emily, I went to the telephone, only to find that the voice was that of Mrs. Wyckington.

"Yes, Mrs. Wyckington, this is Mr. Bimple," I said, but before I could say more dear Emily was at my side.

"Is it mother?" she cried. "Oh, let me speak to her! Let me tell her our splendidly glorious news!"

I put the receiver in Emily's hand. For fully three minutes I heard nothing but "Yes, mother," and "Yes, I understand," and "Yes, certainly." Then Emily hung up the receiver and turned to me.

"Clarence," she said, more sternly than she had ever spoken to me, "mother has told me how marvelously you slit father's Gladstone and mended it again. She says, Clarence, that you put a blue satin ballet slipper, stained with champagne, into the bag. Did you?"

Through my mind passed rapidly all that

I knew of that blue satin slipper. I thought of the wonderful order for cement Mr. Wyckington had given me, and what he had said over the telephone. I knew, by instinct, exactly what had happened at the Wyckington home. I knew that if I failed Mr. Wyckington now, he would cancel the order for one million gross of cement, and never—as long as my life lasted—permit me to marry dearest Emily.

I looked at the dear girl with tears in my eyes.

"Very well, Clarence!" said Emily sternly, and she looked more like her mother than I had ever known her to look. "You will please explain where and how you got that blue satin slipper. I am waiting, Clarence!"

I am not a Henry Wyckington. I dropped into a chair and wept. How strange, how incomprehensible is life! Those who see me riding in grandeur in my ten-thousand-dollar automobile say:

"See! There is Clarence Bimple, the millionaire cement manufacturer. How happy he must be!"

But as I sit in my lonely grandeur I say to myself:

"Alas, Clarence Bimple, if you had only known how you got a blue satin slipper that you never had, Emily Wyckington might now be your loving wife, instead of being Mrs. R. P. Galloway, of the firm of Galloway & Gross, manufacturers of laundry soap, who failed last year with assets of fifty thousand dollars and liabilities of more than a million!"

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## THE SHRINE OF SPIRIT

DEAREST, I did not ask that you should be

So beautiful; I sought, instead, the rare

Companionship of sweet, high sympathy

To fold me like the grace of springtide air.

This did I win, and more—the answering thrill

Of your shy rapture, like a yielding bride's,

As we were blent into one passionate will.

Why did God make you beautiful besides?

Yet it is well. What eyes less darkly bright

Could flash the ardent softness that is you?

What form less slender or what limbs less light

Could dance your joy across the scattering dew?

Oh, loveliest spirit, virginal, divine,

How else than in pure beauty could you shine?

Charles Winship



# Blind Justice\*

A STORY OF CRIME, PUNISHMENT, AND MERCY

By Frank R. Adams

Author of "Five Fridays," "No Experience Required," etc.

## XXII

**A** HASTY discussion of time-tables followed. They made the discovery that there would not be another train until late afternoon; so Swift, impatient of delay, decided upon hiring an automobile. Although warned that the roads were in wretched condition, he set out upon his trip almost immediately, Philip bidding him Godspeed and good luck.

They had two blow-outs and a broken spring before the car that John Swift had chartered arrived in the town near the Governor's cabin. It was supper time for the chauffeur, and long past, but Swift declined nourishment and went out to look for another car in which to go on.

At the one-horse garage there wasn't a single machine available, but the owner had a nearly new motor cycle, which he was willing to rent if the stranger would put up a deposit large enough to cover its cost. Swift accepted the condition, and bumped over the rough road to the lake. At the edge of the lake he hired a rowboat, as Saidee had done, and ferried himself across to the Governor's cabin—the only cabin that was lighted.

He walked quickly up the path and knocked on the mosquito bar door. The doctor answered the summons with his finger on his lips.

"Come in quietly," he admonished. "The Governor is asleep at last."

"I have got to see him," said Swift.

"It can't be done," replied the doctor.

"But I have got to, I tell you!" declared Swift. "An innocent man is going to be executed at the State prison unless the Governor pardons him. I have come all the way from South America to tell him what I know."

The doctor considered thoughtfully.

"You will realize how fruitless your errand has been when I tell you that Governor Logan is suffering from a second attack of paralysis. He might listen to you, were he awake. He might even comprehend, but he could not reply, and he could not use his hand to write his signature. It is a curious freak of fate that this stroke should come at this particular moment, but what can we do? If we should arouse the Governor and place your request before him, you would gain nothing, and he, harassed by the mental problem, would be very seriously affected, and all to no good."

Swift, dazed, tried to think what to do.

"I must do something," he muttered.

"Do you suppose we could send a wire to the warden at the prison which would delay the execution until the Governor is well?"

"H-m! We could send a wire, but I don't know whether it would have any effect. I suspect that all official messages like that are sent in some kind of code, at least have a secret signature that makes them official. I don't know what it is, and I certainly have no authority to sign the Governor's name. You see, my boy, I don't know you, and I have no right to interfere with the workings of justice, even if I could merely go on your say-so. This has been a very famous case, and a great many efforts have been made to have Reever McCall pardoned—oh, yes, I knew to whom you were referring all the time. It is to avoid these well-meant petitions for mercy on McCall's behalf that the Governor was ordered here. So far as he is concerned, the case is finished. He has placed himself on record as being unwilling to take any steps to upset the sentence of the court that condemned Lieutenant Governor Mc-

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Nab's slayer. I have heard him express himself very strongly upon this subject, and I personally could do nothing that would frustrate his spoken desire."

Swift, in his impatience, thought the kindly old doctor a prolix fool. Politely disengaging himself, he went back to his rowboat and out in the middle of the lake to think.

There did not seem to be much hope, and yet he couldn't give up. Knowing what he knew, it was simply impossible to let Reever McCall go to the chair. If necessary, he must stop it by actual violence.

The first step was to go to the place where Reever McCall was. He had no clear idea of what he would do when he arrived at the prison. He didn't know how far a warden's authority extended. Unless there was some absurdly senseless red tape about it, he ought to be able to startle the authorities into waiting until his claim had been officially heard.

Yes, lacking the interview with the Governor, the next best thing was to put himself in the hands of the prison authorities.

He rowed hastily for the shore, started up his two-wheeled machine gun, and turned back over the trail.

### XXIII

HAD it not been an unaccustomed muscular effort, rowing back across the lake would doubtless have been a refreshing exercise for Saidee. The night was cool and clear, and the stars seemed low and friendly; but her back and shoulders ached before she reached the other shore. If it had not been for the reassuring crackle of the forged pardon in the bosom of her dress, she would have lain down in sheer fatigue and rested there in the bottom of the boat.

She wondered if she would ever have time to rest again, if all the rest of her life she was to be constantly spurred on by sharp-pointed seconds. She looked at her luminous wrist watch. Nine o'clock—perhaps eight hours until dawn; and the State prison was one hundred and fifty miles away.

It wasn't so very far, measured in terms of modern methods of locomotion; but Saidee shuddered when she considered the distance, and bent new strength to her oars. With the pardon in her hands, no matter if it was obtained under false pretenses, it would be a cruelly ironic fate that would foil her at the last minute.

She returned the boat to the man of whom she had rented it, and got her deposit back.

"How can I get into town?" she asked.

"To-night?"

"Certainly."

He considered.

"There ain't no good way. You'd better stay here until morning, and catch the stage. My wife takes boarders, and—"

"Isn't there a stage or a bus to-night?"

He laughed.

"No—the last stage was at five o'clock. The drivers don't like this road after dark."

"Has any one around here an automobile? Haven't you one?"

"Thanks, miss, for the compliment, but I ain't even got a first-class wheelbarrow. Folks in these parts don't run much to machinery. We're mostly water people. I don't think there's a car owner this side of town, and even there you'll only find mostly flivvers."

"Could I telephone for some one to come out from town and get me?" Saidee inquired, thinking rapidly.

"You could, I expect," the native opined meditatively; "only there ain't no telephone nearer than Whittaker's place, and that's two miles in the wrong direction; so that if it shouldn't be working, which it most generally ain't, you'd be worse off than ever."

"How far is it to town?"

"Five miles—a good five miles. You ain't going to walk it, are you?"

"I am, if that's the only way I can get there," Saidee declared with determination. "I'll leave my grip with you and carry just what I need in my hand bag."

While the boatman held a lantern, she selected a small comb, a toothbrush, and a couple of handkerchiefs from her suit case and stuffed them into her overgrown purse. After a second's hesitation she removed the pardon from the front of her dress and put that in the bag, too. With a long walk before her, there was no use in being irritated by a bulky paper inside her clothing. Besides, it might drop through, for Saidee wore no corset.

The native, a kindly old soul, and full of insatiable curiosity as to why she should be in such a hurry, escorted her to the road and gave her final directions.

"Just follow the telegraph poles, and you can't miss it," he said. "Perhaps there will be a car going your way, and

you can get a lift," he continued; "but I don't know who it would be at this time of the night. There's one thing, though, kind of lucky."

"And what is that?" demanded Saidee, amused in spite of herself.

"There ain't hardly any wild animals around here any more. There was a wild cat last winter, but Len Smith shot him, or says he did. He ain't got no hide to show for it, but he claims the beast was so full of bullet holes it was absolutely worthless except for dog meat."

He was still talking when Saidee had propelled herself out of earshot, and the rays of his friendly lantern followed her to the first turn in the road. As she looked back, he swung it in railway fashion over his head, as if to signal full speed ahead.

Around the corner the way was very dark, sheltered on both sides by second growth forests, not very high, but quite impenetrable.

The road under foot, which had once been crushed stone, had been neglected so long, and had been upheaved so often by the frost, that it was full of irregular hollows and loose stones, which made the traveling very difficult.

Saidee, who was no amateur at walking, had no illusions about making speed on this first lap of her journey. With the road as it was, and by taking a pace that she could maintain until she arrived, she knew that it would require at least an hour and a half to reach town. That was about one-fifth of the time she had allowed herself for the entire trip. It seemed criminal to waste so important a segment of the night in covering so little ground, but it had to be done, and she trudged forward resolutely.

Perhaps halfway to town she heard the sound of a gasoline engine, but it was coming from the opposite direction to that in which she was traveling. With a woman's instinctive caution at meeting a man on the road at night, Saidee withdrew to the side of the highway and stepped far enough into the bordering shrubbery to escape the path of the searchlight.

The motor was traveling rapidly. As the light bobbed closer over the stones and hollows, Saidee made out that it was a motor cycle, bounding and skidding at a terrific rate over a road which even in daylight was none too good for that method of locomotion.

Saidee wondered where the rider was going in such a hurry. Had she stood out in the roadway, and let the rays of the searchlight fall upon her, she would have found out, for the cyclist would have recognized her, and would have realized that he had come to his journey's end. As it was, he roared by, and Saidee, abandoning her idle speculations as to who it might be, resumed her march toward the town and the railway station.

Pretty well used up physically, she nevertheless held her body resolutely to the task by sheer weight of determination, and she arrived at the village just about on time.

The place, asleep under the stars, looked cold and deserted. She found the railway station, but it was dark and locked.

A premonition of the truth clutched icily at Saidee's heart. There were no more trains that night! And miles and miles lay between her and the pitiful old man whose life depended upon her covering the intervening distance before the rays of the morning sun announced a new day.

Well, there were other means of transportation besides railroads. Saidee hastened up the main street of the village, and found a garage. It, too, was dark in front, but there was a light in a back window, and she heard the faint sound of a hammer clanging on steel.

Saidee pounded on the door again and again, until the racket she made was heard above the noise in the workroom. A blinking mechanic in greasy overalls finally admitted her.

"What's the idea?" he began, but stopped when he saw that it was a stranger, a girl.

"I want to hire an automobile," Saidee stated.

"Ain't got no automobiles to rent," rejoined the mechanic succinctly. "Had one, but I sold it last week."

"What are all these cars?"

Saidee indicated the array of vehicles, some of them under canvas, which stood on the garage floor.

"Them's all repair jobs," the mechanic explained; "all excepting the hearse, and I don't think I can rent you that, because there's a funeral to-morrow morning."

"Hey, Mike!" came a voice from the rear of the garage. "Hurry back, will you? I've got this darned spring just ready to slip in, and I've got to have help."

"Coming!" said Mike. "Excuse me a minute, lady. I've got to finish up a job I'm working on."

Without offering any further assistance, he left her standing upon the floor of the garage and returned to the workroom. Dully apathetic, Saidee followed. She was not ready to give up the idea of getting a car to take her somewhere—at least to the main line of the railroad, where she could get a night train to the State prison.

Standing in shadows, she watched the two men in the strained position of those who are trying to fit a slightly oversize spring into a spring shackle. She almost held her breath until the spring bolt was slipped into place. Then the two men got up from the floor and regarded their job complacently.

"By heck, I thought she never would go in!" said Mike.

"I knew she had to," declared the other, apparently a man of more determination than the mechanic.

The other workman was not wearing overalls, and his clothing looked as if he was not in the habit of doing so. He had not shaved for several days, and a cud of something—probably tobacco—made a hard little lump on his lower left jaw.

He wiped his hands thoughtfully upon his trousers.

"I guess that spring 'll last," he declared. "Now you fill me up with gas and oil, and I'll be ready to start back the first thing in the morning."

"Where were you going?" asked Saidee, emerging from the shadow.

The man by the car regarded the girl in surprise.

"Holy cats! Where did you come from?"

"That doesn't really matter, does it?" said Saidee pleasantly. "What I was wondering was in which direction you were going."

"Me? Oh, I'm going back to Greenfield. I run a taxi there."

Saidee's heart leaped with a new hope, for her way to the State prison lay through Greenfield.

"I am going that way myself," she said. "Perhaps I could hire you to take me?"

The man regarded her with a grin.

"I don't mind a little company," he said. "If you want to ride in the front seat with me, it won't cost you nothing. Just be on hand the first thing in the morning, and—"

Saidee shrank back at the suggestion in the man's tone, but in her desperate plight she could not afford to take umbrage at what was possibly only rough courtesy.

"But I don't want to go in the morning," she began.

"When do you wish to go?"

"Right now." Then, seeing the objections which were forming in his brain, she continued rapidly: "I'll make it well worth your while to start to-night."

"I wouldn't leave this garage to-night for less than a hundred dollars," declared the driver with an air of finality.

"I'll take you!" said Saidee sharply, with the tone of one who closes a bargain. "Get your gas and oil, and we'll start."

The rapidity with which the girl had accepted an offer which had been intended as a bluff knocked the driver off his feet.

"Have you got that much money?" he demanded truculently.

"Yes," Saidee admitted.

"Then let's see it."

Saidee opened her purse and produced from it a roll which contained not only one hundred-dollar bill, but several. She had drawn out practically all her available funds from the bank for this last struggle for her father's life and liberty.

The eyes of the driver glistened. He ran his tongue over his lips.

"All right! I'll take you," he decided.

"Mike, give me two quarts of oil, and fill her up to the nozzle with bug juice!"

## XXIV

HALF an hour after Saidee had left, John Swift, arriving on his motor cycle, made almost exactly the same rounds that she had. He went first to the railway station, and discovered that it was closed. Then he went to the garage, where he found the proprietor closing the doors and leaving for the night.

"I want a car," he said briefly.

"Seems to me," said Mike, "that the demand for automobiles around here is getting pretty good to-night. If I could be sure that the business would keep up, I'd take on an agency."

"How about it?" snapped Swift, cutting him short. "Have you a car to rent or sell?"

"I told you once before this evening that I didn't have nothing but that motor cycle you got there. That 'll hang together twice as far as any car in the shop."



"Where's that bus I came up here in?" demanded Swift. "It wasn't in very good shape, but—"

"That's all repaired now," said Mike.

"Good!" returned Swift eagerly. "Tell me, where can I find the driver? We'll start back immediately."

The garage man chuckled.

"He's went, mister."

"Gone?" echoed Swift. "What was his hurry? In his shoes, I wouldn't have gone back over that road to-night—not unless I'd had to."

"He had to," Mike explained. "He had to or else lose a hundred dollars, which the lady offered him to take her."

Swift whistled.

"She sure must have been in a hurry!"

"She sure was."

"Who was she?"

"I don't know who she was. I've never seen her before."

"Well, I suppose it's none of my business, but confound her for grabbing my car! I suppose there's nothing for me to do but to follow on this gasoline camel of yours."

"You can go faster with her, anyhow."

"Perhaps," Swift admitted grimly; "but I prefer to travel in a straight line, and not quite so much up and down. However, I've got to go one way or another."

He gave the starting pedal of the gas bicycle a swift kick. The engine tore open the silence of the night with a ripping volley. Swift mounted, and let her jump away down the rock-strewn highway. Most of the pitfalls he avoided, but once in a while a deep hole or an unobserved square-cut stone would bounce him into the air.

Luck was with him in that he always landed back top side up, and the motor cycle never quite flattened out under him. One thing was advantageous—there was practically no traffic at that time of the night. He did not meet a single car, and saw only one going in the same direction.

That was during the second hour out, when he was nearing Greenfield. Like his own machine, the car was going at break-neck speed, and Swift had to use every ounce of power in his engine to overhaul it. Finally, in a burst of speed, he passed it. Both of them were kicking up an awful mess of dust, so that Swift could not see clearly, but he had an idea that the car he had left behind was the one in which he had ridden out that afternoon.

There was some satisfaction in having passed it. He knew by that circumstance that he was doing absolutely all in his power to reach his goal in time. The garage man had been right—the motor cycle was faster than the car would have been.

Back in the car which Swift had just passed Saidee was huddled in the swaying, rattling tonneau, chilled to the bone, but not knowing it; hungry, but only vaguely conscious of that; and wearied beyond all expression. Her mind, however, paid no attention to the complaints of her tortured body, and went ever ahead of the car, trying to lure it on to more speed.

From time to time she leaned forward and looked over the shoulder of the driver at the odometer. Each time she checked off the number of miles yet to go, and looked at her wrist watch. She had her hand bag clutched tightly in her arms, as if she expected that her precious burden might be jarred out of the car or blown back by the self-created wind. Her clutching it was like a drowning person's instinctive grasp of a life line. She couldn't tell why she held it so tightly, but it would have taken a tremendous force to make her let go.

Arrived at Greenfield on schedule time, Saidee ran across a new difficulty. The chauffeur refused to proceed.

"I've got to get some sleep some time," he said in response to her suggestion that they should travel on to the prison.

"You can get somebody else here," he said. "There's other drivers besides me."

"Very likely," she demanded; "but I doubt if there are any quite so reckless as you."

He acknowledged the tribute with a grunt.

"Don't tell that to the cops," he growled.

"Besides, the road from now on ought to be better. Won't you take me?"

"I'll do it for another hundred bucks."

At any other time she would have rejected his proposal as preposterous, for the price was something like two dollars a mile; but now her inhibitory faculties were in abeyance. Nothing mattered but speed, and this man was a fool for fast driving. Perhaps his car belonged to some one else. At any rate he had no regard for it, and he pushed it as Saidee was pushing herself—to the last end of its endurance. That alone was worth the money.

She opened her purse once more, to give him a hundred-dollar bill.

"That's your pay for as far as we've gone. The other will be yours when we draw up at the gates of the prison."

The man eyed the roll of bills with covetous approval.

"Wait a minute until I look at my gas and oil, and then we'll beat it," he said.

His examination seemed to be satisfactory. He reported that there was no need to stop for an additional supply, and climbed back to the driver's seat.

Out in the open country, with a cement road stretching straight for miles and miles ahead, he let out his motor to the last notch. The car didn't rattle so much now, although the engine made enough noise for a couple of aeroplanes.

About two miles ahead they could see a spot of light going in the same direction as themselves. The driver tried to overtake it, but without success. It gradually drew away. It was going faster than they were. Saidee wondered vaguely why any one else should have need on this particular night to travel at such a rate of speed.

Farmhouses, barns, silos, hurled themselves swiftly to the rear. Villages made themselves noticeable only because of the increased uproar of the engine as the buildings on either side of the main street hurled the noise back in their faces. Bridges rattled beneath their tires, turns in the road nearly racked the frame of the car to pieces as it tried to turn turtle in rounding them. In some mysterious way the demon at the wheel managed to make his bus hold together and cling like a leech to the road.

To Saidee, the miles piled up with a slowness that seemed incredible when she compared it with the speed of the machine. Still, they piled up, and the girl realized with a thrill of elation that they were approaching the end, and that there would still be more than an hour to spare.

Ten miles more!

Nine miles more!

After what seemed an eternity she had only eight miles more to go!

Saidee caught herself leaning forward in her seat, as if by so doing she could urge the car on. If she could clip off that last terrible hour for her father, it was well worth fighting for.

She could picture his agony as he waited. It would almost be better for him if

he had given up hope; but she knew that he was still expecting her to arrive before the end. The tension on his nerves must be something terrible.

Seven miles! It would take only about ten minutes more at the speed they were making.

Saidee could scarcely realize her good fortune after such a day of trouble. It seemed impossible that things could be going her way at last.

Six miles! She found herself laughing at nothing—a sort of hysterical laugh. Perhaps she was picturing her father's face as she would see it when he found out what she had brought.

Five miles! She wondered if she would ever tell him that she had signed the pardon herself. She decided that she had better not. Perhaps it would never be necessary for any one to know. If the Governor should die—

Of course, she didn't wish that that would happen, but it would be very convenient. She shuddered a little at the thought. She was appalled by the idea that the death of a fellow being could be of advantage to her. In her heart—a heart that was really a clean one—she made a silent prayer that she might be absolved for the wicked thought she had almost had.

Four miles! The car drew up sharply at the side of the road.

"What's the matter?" demanded Saidee, when the noise of the grinding brake had subsided.

The motor was still running, but in comparative silence. The driver descended from his seat and held the door open for her.

"You'll have to get out for a minute, miss."

Unquestioningly she obeyed. Perhaps he wanted to get some tools from under the rear seat.

As she stepped to the ground, he snatched her precious hand bag from her hand, pushed her away from the car, slammed the door, and jumped back to his own seat. With a grinding of gears the car leaped away, gathered speed, roared on, and became only a vanishing red light.

Saidee stood in the middle of the road, looking after it, absolutely stunned.

She could scarcely appreciate the weight of the disaster that had fallen upon her. Only four miles from the prison, and absolutely helpless!

Even if she could get there on time, which she doubted, her purse was gone, and with it the pardon which she had worked so hard to get—for which she had even become a criminal. Fate had cheated her of the cup of success just as she raised it to her lips.

"What's the use? What's the use?" she repeated to herself again and again.

But her feet, impelled by instinct to carry on, began to drag her in the direction of her goal.

There was a difference, however, between her progress now and her walk through the woods earlier in the evening. This time there was no regulating of her steps with the idea of conserving her strength to last to the end. Instead, she half ran, half stumbled, crying some of the time, and panting like an exhausted dog.

She had no idea how much ground she was gaining. She only knew that time was racing by. Each time that she consulted her wrist watch, she groaned and hurried on a little faster on feet that were now only moving mechanically.

## XXV

JOHN SWIFT was holding steadily at about fifty miles an hour. His motor was working perfectly, and, since he had struck a good road, he was praising the man who sold it to him.

All at once it sputtered, choked, and expired. He tinkered with it for perhaps five minutes before he thought of looking into the gas tank. It was empty, and he kicked himself for a double-dyed fool for not having had sense enough to replenish his store somewhere along the line. Of course, there had been no garages open, and he had thought that he could reach his goal. Still, he might have aroused some one. He had been taking too many chances.

What should he do? On the motor cycle he was due to arrive at the prison in ample time; but without it, trusting to his own feet, he doubted very seriously if it could be done.

While he was debating, he heard a faint roar down the highway. Looking up, he saw the swaying lights of a car coming his way. Perhaps he could get a lift; but suppose the oncoming car should refuse to stop?

He could not afford to take chances. There was a way to make sure. Hastily laying his plans in the few seconds he had

to spare, he extracted a wrench from the tool kit of his motor cycle, and laid the cycle itself crosswise in the road.

Next he tied a handkerchief over the lower part of his face and pulled his cap down over his eyes. As the roaring automobile came up, he stepped into the full glare of the searchlight and leveled his wrench, revolver fashion, at the driver.

The latter came to a halt with his front wheels on the motor cycle.

"Get down!" commanded Swift.

The driver reluctantly obeyed. Swift stood behind him, with the wrench planted firmly in his back.

"Keep your hands up, or I'll fire!" Swift growled.

He hastily searched the driver, not so much for the purpose of robbery as to find out if his victim had a real weapon. The man had none, but in his pocket was nearly a thousand dollars in bills.

"You must be more of a bandit than the average taxi driver," Swift remarked, putting the roll in his own pocket. "Now, march! If you look back, I'll drop you cold!"

The chauffeur had no intention of looking back. He marched swiftly into the woods at the side of the road.

Swift climbed to the driver's seat of the car, backed away from his motor cycle, and skirted it as he went forward again. Then he let the gears slip into high, once more on the road, and with every chance of getting there on time.

## XXVI

WITH a throat that was raw from the hot rasping of her panting breath, Saidee dragged her leaden limbs mechanically up the drive to the prison gate.

It was daylight. She was too late; but she came on, sick with despair, not knowing exactly why she came, but obeying mechanically the command which her will had imposed upon her body long ages ago.

With listless eyes which nevertheless had to rest on something, she looked at the hopeless dun brick of the walls, huge, high, and impassable. Where for the sake of picturesqueness there should have been crenelated towers, there were little wooden sentry boxes mounted high in the corners, and carefully hooded searchlights.

One of the sentries stood outside his box on the wall. He was looking down at Saidee curiously, his high-powered rifle in the

hollow of his arm, carried negligently, hunter fashion.

None of these details arrested her attention, however. Her eyes, dropping from their scrutiny of the sky line, focused with difficulty on the shadow still hovering over the prison gate.

There was an automobile standing there. At first the mere presence of a motor car conveyed no particular significance to Saidee's mind. There were a dozen reasons why there might be early visitors on this particular morning. It was customary for the newspapers to send representatives to an execution. That would account for an automobile; or some one of the officials who lived outside might have been called in, or a doctor.

All at once Saidee noted something familiar about the car. The wind shield was all one piece of plate glass, instead of two, as is now customary. The large piece of glass had a crack in the lower left hand corner, and strips of adhesive tape held it firm.

Saidee had been looking at that cracked wind shield all night. How did it happen that the car of the man who had robbed her came to be standing in front of the State prison? It seemed a curious destination for a thief. It did not appear likely either that he had given himself up or that he had been arrested. Surely justice was never so speedy as that!

Undoubtedly it was the same car. As Saidee came abreast of it, she recognized the old-fashioned brass dial of the speedometer. Idly, as she passed, she glanced into the tonneau.

On the floor lay her hand bag, gaping open. Some of its contents were strewn about on the coco matting—her toothbrush, her handkerchief, and a long folded paper. It was the pardon—the pardon for which she had broken her word to one man, had destroyed the faith that another man had in her, and had seriously injured the health of still another, whose well-being was of tremendous importance to the State. It was the pardon, miraculously delivered at the very door of the prison—but fifteen minutes too late!

A bitter cry of revolt rose to Saidee's lips. She crushed back an impulse to curse the God who had tried her beyond human endurance.

With the pardon in her hands, and still impelled by that mental command she had

laid upon herself hours before, she turned her listless steps to the prison gate. The guard stopped her.

"There is positively no admission until after the execution," he stated.

"Isn't it over yet?" Saidee demanded.

"No, there was some delay," he replied kindly; "but it will be only a few minutes now, and—"

"Wait! Stop! Look at this!" Saidee opened the official document. "Let me in quick!"

As the significance of the paper which she held before his eyes penetrated his understanding, the guard galvanized to energetic life.

"Post number one, relief!" he shouted, and an emergency guard tumbled out of the prison office on the run.

Surrendering his post to the relief, and without taking time to explain, the gateman led Saidee through the main prison across a court and into another smaller building.

This latter building was surrounded by special guards, whom the gateman passed by virtue of his uniform. It hummed portentously with whirling dynamos. The power generator was out of sight, but you more than sensed its presence—you actually felt it.

Down a corridor, past another guard, and through an iron door, Saidee was hurried. She stood in the lethal chamber. It was mercifully a blur. There were a score of men there, most of them seated. Separated from them was another figure, also seated, but held in that position by sinister belts.

A corner of the room was screened off. This, Saidee knew from description, was where the switch was located.

She tried to cry out, but her vocal chords refused their office. All she could do was to hold out the pardon to the warden, who was standing. Her lips moved in explanation, but her eyes closed, and the room swung around in a giddy circle as the floor billowed up to catch her.

## XXVII

SAIDEE recovered from her faintness and nausea to find herself out in the open air, and once more being carried. At first she wasn't quite sure what her means of transportation was, but even before she opened her eyes she knew that she was in a strong man's arms. That wonderfully comfort-



able hammocklike support under her knees and shoulders could not be supplied by a stretcher, or even by a wheeled chair. Besides, she felt a chest expanding and contracting with deep, regular breaths.

Saidee opened her eyes just a little, to verify her conclusion. Then she closed them with a groan. She was only dreaming, after all, for the face she thought she had seen bending solicitously over her was the tender, compassionate one of Steve Cline—Steve Cline, whom she knew to be in the southern hemisphere, thousands of miles away.

But her heart missed a beat when she found that her ears were deceiving her, as well as her eyes; for she could hear the man of her dreams whispering:

"Saidee, Saidee, heart of my heart, open your eyes!"

It sounded as if he loved her. True, he didn't say it in so many words, but the implication was there, none the less.

Saidee thought she had better rouse herself and look into the matter, dream or no dream. Her eyes opened wide on a blue sky pretty well obscured by a set of bronzed and slightly haggard masculine features. The owner of these features was bending over her and murmuring more or less incoherent words, which ceased to flow the instant her eyes were opened, thus leaving his mouth open foolishly.

It was Steve Cline—undoubtedly Steve Cline, no figure of a dream, but in the flesh!

Seeing that Saidee was conscious, he closed his mouth and started off on a perfectly fresh and disappointingly sensible sentence.

"There, there! I knew you would come out of it in a minute," he said. "You got here in plenty of time. Your father is all right, and pretty soon you will be."

Saidee was slightly piqued at the impersonal turn of Steve's remarks. Still, she was sure she had heard him the first time, and she smiled a complacent little smile, such as women always wear when they have beaten another victim to his knees. He could talk as much as he liked about other things—she knew what she knew!

It was so totally unexpected, too. Even his presence was too good to be true, but that he should have breathed into her unconscious ear the words of love that she had heard was far beyond her wildest expectation. She confessed to herself that

ever since she had been a little girl her heart had been his.

Then the heart she was thinking about gave her a sudden stab. She recollected that her affections were not free to be given where she willed. She was bound by a tie stronger than her word. The least thing she could do in the way of gratitude to Philip Logan for his faith and unswerving loyalty to her when every one else had turned away was to marry him if he wished it. In her heart of hearts she knew that he did wish it.

She had a momentary hope that when Philip heard how she had forged his father's signature he would despise her, and would be glad to release her from her promise to marry him if her father went free; but she knew well enough that she was judging him wrongly. Philip had proved too completely that he really cared for her, and that he would continue to care for her no matter what might happen. She must cut Steve's words out of her heart, even though it would be a cruelly painful operation.

There were practical details to be thought of now, and her still benumbed brain tackled them wearily.

"Put me down, Mr. Swift," she said gently.

"Call me Steve," he suggested gruffly. "I'm going back to my right name."

He placed her on her feet and steadied her with a firm hand under her arm. She wondered why he was abandoning his alias, but other and more pressing considerations forced this one into the background of her mind.

"What I can't understand," said Steve, "is how you managed to get the Governor's signature on the pardon. I was at his place up in the woods last night, and the physician in charge told me that he could not be seen—that he was suffering from an attack of paralysis."

"I didn't get the Governor's signature," Saidee explained.

"But it was signed."

"I signed it. Have you forgotten my childish accomplishment?" She searched his face for evidence of disapproval. "I know I promised you that I would never copy another signature, but it was the only way. I broke my word."

He patted her arm absently.

"Then we must hurry right back to the Governor and get a real pardon," he told

her. "Your father is safe at least for to-day, and by to-morrow I am sure the Governor will order a retrial, which will acquit him."

"What makes you think that?" Saidee asked dully.

"I know whereof I speak, young lady." Steve was quite positive in his statement. "Suppose we let the explanation ride until we see the Governor again? Then I can make it all at once. I wouldn't ask you to go back there again to-day, except that I think it's best to make a clean breast of the whole matter and start absolutely fresh."

Saidee put herself entirely in Steve's hands. He superintended a short interview with her father, who was slowly recovering from the nervous strain he had undergone, and then escorted her to the car from Greenfield, which was still obstructing traffic at the prison gate.

### XXVIII

ON the train Steve managed to secure a vacant drawing room, which he ordered made up.

"You must lie down and sleep, if possible, until we have to change to the jerk-water line, where rest is impossible."

Saidee obeyed humbly. She would have preferred to sit beside him somewhere, perhaps even to lean against him if she got too tired; but the relief of having a man who understood on the job made her disinclined to demur in any particular. In Steve's presence she let the mantle of anxiety slip from her shoulders. What the outcome would be she neither knew nor thought to question. All would be well. She trusted implicitly in the power of her man.

Yes, her man!

No matter what might come between them, no matter how force of circumstances might separate them, Steve Cline belonged to her and she to him. She was as positive of his feeling toward her as she was of her own love for him.

It was with a strange, reckless content that she rested on the knowledge of Steve's undeclared love. To-morrow it would not be hers to lean against, but to-morrow, to one who is in the midst of adventure, must take care of itself.

It seemed as if she had known, ever since she could remember, that in her fight with the world her only real ally was Steve,

that only in his presence she could relax her guard. With all others, even with her father, there had to be some pretense, some sort of a false front, even if it were only that of never being afraid. The pose of self-reliance is fine most of the time, but it is wonderful to have some impregnable retreat where for a moment one can take off the armor and lay down the sword.

Steve was Saidee's one invulnerable refuge. Because she might never be able to fly to him again, she resolved to enjoy to the full extent this last rest on secure footing, before taking wing on the flight that would probably last all the rest of her life.

Therefore she quashed all the questions that rose in her mind—questions as to how Steve proposed to make Reeve McCall's reprieve permanent, what would become of them all in the future, what her punishment might be for forgery, what would happen to Steve upon confessing that he was a man with a police record. It was safe to say that the near future held a tremendous upheaval for Saidee and her immediate circle; but what it would be she neither guessed nor greatly cared. Instead, she permitted the languor of present safety to anesthetize her thoughts.

She slept a little, a very little, before they reached Greenfield; but almost as good as sleep was the blessed relaxation from nervous strain in which she luxuriated. She enjoyed to the full this tiny little oasis of peace.

They had lunch at Greenfield, and made a fairly good connection out of there on the junction line to the Governor's retreat.

Steve Cline was taciturn and formal by turns. Saidee, who thought she knew why, smiled inwardly. Even when your own heart is breaking, it's nice to know that several people are fighting over you, and that some one you care about is grumpy because he has to give you up.

Steve did not speak a word to give expression to his feelings. That, of course, was a continuation of his modest policy of not allowing Saidee's life in any way to become entangled with his. The girl was well aware, however, that his determination to guard her welfare was not now inspired by the purely altruistic motives which had once actuated him. Then she had been a clever child who deserved to have a chance; now she was a woman of beauty and charm, over whom men plotted, fought, and died.

Saidee sighed. It was rather terrible, albeit flattering, to be a bone of contention. Such a tribute was totally unexpected. Until very recently, Saidee had never considered herself as anything of a charmer. On the contrary, she had always occupied, in her own estimation, an extremely utilitarian niche in the scheme of things.

Her transformation into a beautiful trouble maker had come on the night when she wore her Paris frock to the Lieutenant Governor's dinner. By putting it on she had been transformed, as if by magic, from a useful but unsought sparrow into a highly prized bird of paradise.

Had it not been for her sudden blaze into beauty, she and her father would have remained in the comfortable safety of obscurity. She blamed herself bitterly, and yet she had meant no wrong. Never had she deliberately set herself out, as so many women do, to apply the torch to the passions of men.

At the end of the railway line Steve and Saidee took the stage, as the girl had done the day before, and transferred from that to the rowboat when they reached the lake.

When the boat was pulled up on the shore, Steve halted for a moment at the foot of the path that led to the shack. Evidently he had something to say; but the words failed him, and he only pressed Saidee's hand and turned away. She knew that he meant it as farewell.

At the door of the shack they were met by Philip Logan.

"The physician sent for me this morning," he explained. "Dad is able to talk a little now."

"I'm glad," declared Saidee, but dismay clutched at her heart; for if the Governor could talk, perhaps he had already countermanded the forged pardon.

"He has told me," Philip went on, "how you obtained your father's pardon."

Saidee searched his face for signs of disapproval, of condemnation. They were not there.

"He says," Philip continued, responding to the question in her eyes, "that you are the bravest girl he has ever met."

"Has he wired the prison authorities that the pardon is a forgery?" Saidee demanded eagerly.

"No," Philip replied; "but the question of his duty is still troubling him. Indeed, I'm afraid that it is weakening him dangerously."

"If I can talk to the Governor," suggested Steve, "I think I can set his mind at rest on the question of duty."

Philip considered.

"I'll speak to the doctor about it."

The physician was of the opinion that if Steve had anything to say which would ease the Governor's mind, an interview might be beneficial rather than otherwise.

Accordingly, they were ushered into the sick chamber.

A big man, down and out, is always more pathetic than a person of smaller stature. The Governor lay like a broken column in the rough, inadequate bed. He was propped up with an extra mattress doubled at his back, and many pillows.

He acknowledged their greetings without himself speaking.

"By my advice," explained the doctor, "he is saving himself every effort." Then, to Governor Logan: "Mr. Swift has something of importance to tell you."

The Governor signified that he was prepared to listen.

"In the first place," began Steve, "my name is not Swift, but Cline—Stephen Cline."

No one seemed particularly amazed at the statement.

"The police would be more likely to recognize the name Cline than you," explained Steve. "My brother and I, years ago, robbed several banks. Then we stopped. We had figured out the chances against us were too great. I spent some time in Europe, but Swing, my brother, stayed in America. He was safe, because, while we were suspected, the police had no evidence against us. Unfortunately, Swing and William McNab, then a detective sergeant, took a fancy to the same girl. She chose Swing, and McNab, furious, started out to 'get' him. In a hundred circuitous ways he made it difficult for Swing to earn a living. Just a whisper in the proper place always did the trick. Swing couldn't hold a job. The woman in the case fell sick. In desperation Swing did exactly what McNab had planned for him—robbed a bank. I happened to get back just at that time, and I was with Swing when they caught him. McNab shot Swing, practically in cold blood. I managed to escape, but McNab knew me now, and I was obliged to leave the country under an assumed name—that of John Swift."

"I did not return to America until after the war. I thought I was safe, even from McNab. He did not seem to recognize me when I met him at the dinner party in his own house. Of course, I never should have entered that house had I known that the Lieutenant Governor was the former detective. As you can imagine, I had no reason to love him. His face, when I saw him again, aroused in me such a passion as I had not felt even in the severest hand-to-hand fighting in France. I had to control myself by an extreme effort of will not to fall upon him then and there.

"Later, as you, Philip, know, I went back to his house to get Saidee, who, in the excitement over the sudden breaking up of the party, had been left behind. The man who answered the door at Lieutenant Governor McNab's house did not seem to know whether Saidee was there or not, and went to see. When he came back to say that she had gone home, I had a funny hunch that he was lying. You know how you get those impressions just from nothing in particular. Under the circumstances, I couldn't do anything about it. I couldn't force my way in and insist upon searching the house; but I was uneasy. I knew McNab, I knew his reputation with women, and I thought I'd make sure; so I went to Saidee's apartment to see if she was really at home. When I got there, I had no small difficulty in persuading the maid to let me in. She was frightened at being all alone—which did not agree very well with the statement I had just received that Saidee had gone home. I questioned the maid, and found out that Mr. McCall had gone to get Saidee in response to a telephone call. He had left, I discovered, since the time that I had been told that Saidee was not at McNab's house."

Steve paused for a second.

"I went back," he continued simply. "It seemed the only thing to do. I did not take the chance of a rebuff this time by ringing the door bell. Instead, I determined to get into the house and find out what was going on. The front door was locked. It was not a good place to break in, anyway, so I went around toward the rear. As I was passing the side I heard some one—a woman—calling for help. The cry seemed to come from an upstairs room, which was lighted. I am a fairly active man, and I climbed to the second story balcony and in through a window. I

had tied a handkerchief over my face, because I did not care to be recognized.

"Saidee was there, struggling to get away from McNab. I interfered, and told her to get out through the window while I held McNab. After she was gone, McNab managed to pull the handkerchief off my face. All the hatred which he had once had for my brother he transferred to me. Like Swing, I had come between him and a woman.

"Well, I didn't exactly love him, either. He said he was going to do for me, and he started in to make good his promise. I have to admit that McNab had plenty of nerve and plenty of strength. He had all the best of it in a rough and tumble, until somebody began to pound on the door. He said that it was the police, and that he would see to it that I got sent up for life. I knew that he could do it, too. There were plenty of old charges he could rake up against me, and he was influential enough to make them stick.

"I had no intention of being captured, if I could possibly help it. Inspired, perhaps, by that hammering on the door, I made a superhuman effort, broke his hold, and threw him across the room. I did not wait to see if he was hurt, but made my escape through the window just as they began breaking down the door. I didn't have much idea that I could evade the hue and cry that McNab would set up after me; but South America seemed about as good a place as anywhere, and as I had transportation already arranged for, I took the boat next morning, just as I had planned, never realizing that McNab was dead and that some one else would be accused of murdering him. My only thought, I am sorry to say, was for my own personal safety.

"The wireless on the tub I traveled on was out of commission about half the time, and I missed the news of McNab's death and McCall's arrest. I didn't hear a thing about it until I happened to see a New York paper two months later, down in Uruguay. That was the first I knew that Reeve McCall was on trial for his life. Of course, I started back. It takes time to make that trip under the best of conditions, and I didn't have much luck. I got here yesterday, and you know the rest. Now I'm here to take McCall's place."

All had listened without comment to Steve's story. Told without any embel-



ishment whatever, a mere skeleton outline of events, it nevertheless held spellbound the people whose lives he was altering by the thread of his narrative. The Governor, especially, appeared to be absorbed. His eyes sparkled with interest.

At the conclusion Philip was first to speak.

"Why did you go back to McNab's house the second time for Saidee?" he asked.

Steve laughed.

"Because I knew McNab, and because I've known Saidee ever since she was a kid, and I wouldn't — couldn't — leave her in trouble."

Philip considered.

"You love her, too," he said.

"Of course," replied Steve.

Saidee turned on him like a flash.

"You never told me that before," she said accusingly.

"Naturally; but I told you to keep away from men like me, and to take your chance where you found it."

"I knew there was some one!" mused Philip.

"It's too late to begin that sort of thing now," said Steve almost irritably. "I made my bed a long time ago. The courts will make short work of the last of the Cline brothers. Governor Logan, I'm ready."

The Governor fluttered his hand on the coverlet in order to command attention.

He smiled painfully and spoke very slowly and deliberately.

"I have only a short time to live. Steve Cline—" He paused to gather himself for another effort. "Steve Cline," he continued, "I'd rather tell God that I let you go than have you with me when I meet him. Suppose you go back to South America and try to make a success of life there — with Saidee!"

The end of the Governor's speech left the room in heavily charged silence. He had taken the destinies of every person in it, save the old doctor, and by a judgment as wise as that of Solomon had shown the road straight ahead.

Saidee did not look at Steve. Instead, she raised her eyes to those of Philip — Philip, who loved her with every fiber of his being, and who would love her to the end, no matter if it ruined his career.

"I can't go with Steve," Saidee declared in a whisper. "I can't, because I have promised—"

She held out her hand to Philip.

He seemed once more the wounded boy of whom she had taken care all night at that railway station in France—a wounded boy who would not groan or whimper no matter how great his pain. His lips were twisted a little now, just as they had been then.

He took her hand, held it for a moment, and then placed it in Steve's.

"He's my pal!" Philip said.

THE END

### THE NEW HUSBANDMAN

BROTHER that plowest the furrow I late plowed,  
God give thee grace and fruitful harvesting!  
'Tis fair, sweet earth, be it under sun or cloud,  
And all about it ever the birds sing.

Yet do I pray thy seed fares not as mine,  
That sowed there stars along with good white grain,  
But reaped thereof—be better fortune thine!—  
Nettles and bitter herbs for all my gain.

Inclement seasons and black winds, perchance,  
Poisoned and soured the fragrant, fecund soil,  
Till I sowed poppies 'gainst remembrance,  
And took to other furrows my laughing toil.

And other men that plowed as I before  
Shall watch thy harvest, trusting thou mayst reap  
Where we have sown, and on thy threshing floor  
Have honest wheat within thy barns to keep!

Andrew McIver Adams

# Leavings

THE STRANGE PATH BY WHICH A WOMAN WHOM EVERY ONE  
PITIED REACHED CONTENTMENT

By Gladys Hall

"POOR Ella Woodling!" people had been saying at intervals for a period of fifteen years. It began when Ella's sister, Delia, announced her engagement to Bayard Furman; for every one in town knew that poor Ella was in love with him herself. Not that there was any reason for Bayard to choose Ella, with Delia to be had; but still, it was pathetic.

Almost everything about Ella was pathetic. She was that kind. It was pathetic to see how she covered over her hurt by talking of how "congenial" she and Bayard were, and how "wonderful" it would be to have him "in the family." Every one knew she didn't care a jot about the congeniality, even supposing it existed—which it didn't; and every one knew that to have him "in the family" would be a daily scourge and cross.

Then, for trousseau purposes, Delia Woodling went to New York; and while there—true to the purport of her trip, at any rate—she suddenly married another man.

Immediately poor Ella began to "make it up" to Bayard. She seemed to be succeeding, but people still said "poor Ella," because they knew she wasn't really succeeding. The fact of it was that Bayard was used to going to the Woodling girls' house for Saturday night dinner and Sunday noon dinner and Sunday night supper. He was used to playing on the Woodling girls' piano and used to being waited upon by the girls and their mother—a thin, futile woman, of whom Ella was a still more futile copy.

There was no one else on the immediate horizon of Bayard's feminine prospects to fill in the embarrassing gap. And Bayard simply had to be made comfortable. He had to have some place to go. Most of all,

he had to have some girl to make a fuss about him. The only forceful part of his nature was that force, or urge. Just then, with his pride hurt, if not his heart, he needed a girl to make much of him more than he had ever needed one before.

Ella was not nearly so good-looking as Delia. Delia had a certain snap, a touch of red in her hair, a flash in her eyes, and dancing feet. But there was no use crying over a girl who didn't know a good thing when she had one; and Ella was nearly as nice as her sister. She wasn't so lively, perhaps, but she was more amenable to reason. She never fretted a fellow, and was always amenable to suggestion or coercion. If Bayard wanted to walk, Ella wanted to walk. If Bayard wanted to go to the movies, Ella wanted to go to the movies.

She was a soft-looking little thing, with pale brown hair, a pale skin, and large, light-colored brown eyes. She dressed rather fancifully, and used perfume of a mediocre brand. It was her one conscious attempt at allurements.

She was rather tactful, too, just at that time. She hinted in a dozen little innuendos that she knew Bayard didn't care about the way Delia had treated him—that anyone as attractive as he didn't need to care. She intimated that Delia wasn't so perfect, even if she was her own sister. Delia did awfully queer things sometimes—always had.

She fed his vanity and bolstered up his self-esteem in countless little ways. She made him feel what he so much wanted to feel again—a charmer, a *Don Juan*.

She thought everything he did was "just wonderful." She said that to be an automobile salesman was certainly a gift. She treasured up every scrap of favorable com-

ment she heard about him around the town, dressed it up with little embellishments of her own, and repeated it to him. She echoed all his opinions, beliefs, and prejudices. She made a point of saying "Bayard thinks so and so," or "Bayard says thus and thus." He was a god, in her estimation. He dwelt on Olympus, and he knew it—when he was with her.

She went about saying that she must "save Bayard." She told how he turned to her, how he needed her, how her nature sustained his. She said that not every one understood a man of his type. She had no personality at all, save that which she pieced together from Delia's leavings. Still, she didn't know the difference, so what did it matter?

Or did she really know? No, it would be absurd to suspect it. Poor Ella Woodling was a simple nature. She believed in the greatness of Bayard Furman. She believed in the prestige of being an automobile salesman. She believed in her own superiority when she rode with Bayard in one of the company's cars.

"I wore that blue taffeta the other night," she would say, with a strained air; "and what do you think? Bayard said to me, 'I like that dress on you, Ella—it looks better than anything I've ever seen you wear.' Can you *imagine* him saying that?"

Or she would come tittering mysteriously up to one, adopt a semiaudible tone, and say:

"*Imagine* this! Bayard took me out in the car yesterday—we went the day before, too, you know—and yesterday, instead of going to Tartown to get that new speedometer, he drove me around Hulitt Park—that long stretch of woods, you know. Wasn't he a *terror*?"

She dressed up more at that time than she had ever done before, or ever did afterward. Poor Ella Woodling!

## II

THEN Bayard and Ella announced their engagement.

"Well!" people said. "Poor Ella!"

If she hadn't been so terrifically, pathetically happy, the thing would have been taken as a matter of course, or as the matter of expediency that it certainly was. Ella forgot that there had been a Delia who had "thrown him down." She told everybody about the way he asked her to

marry him—when it happened, where it happened, and every word said between them when it happened. She told them how much "too wonderful for any words" his love for her was, and repeated every least, pitiful commonplace he uttered. She said that she thought of Bayard and herself every time she read "Romeo and Juliet," or "things like that."

Ella had succeeded, yet every one knew she hadn't really succeeded. They didn't know just why, but they knew it just the same. They knew because Ella was so aware of him all the time, while he, comparatively, was so unaware of Ella. If some other girl had come his way during the brief space of their engagement—some girl with dancing feet and a flash in her eyes and any sort of interest in the perfect import of Bayard Furman—

But no other girl did. The country club was not built at the time, and the other eligible girls were all engaged elsewhere. There was practically no one else but Ella to be had.

Ella didn't know that. Her conquest was signal. From among a world of women—she told it herself—Bayard had cleaved his difficult way to her. She was elect among women.

Then Mrs. Woodling died, and a month later Bayard married Ella and went to live in the Woodling house. Some people were mean enough to say that Bayard never would have come across with the final step if Mrs. Woodling had not died and left them a comfortable home to step into and a little money besides.

There was no great step for Bayard in marrying Ella. He simply continued his Saturday night dinners and Sunday noon dinners and Sunday night suppers, with the addenda of week-day meals in between. It was a very comfortable arrangement for Bayard—much more comfortable than his room at Mrs. Close's boarding house had been, with the meals not what they should have been, and board to pay.

Ella still continued to play echo, and all was much as it had been before. There was an interval of about five years, during which people more or less forgot her and her affairs.

There was nothing to make people take notice of Ella Furman. She didn't arrest attention. Now and then she came into the neighborhood limelight, but always vicariously.

Delia had babies—twin boys.

"Bully for Delia! Delia has pep," Bayard said.

Poor Ella had never had a baby. When Bayard delivered his eulogy on Delia's twins, Ella pursed up her lips, and told people that Bayard kept saying that the Woodlings were a wonderful family. She borrowed a fictitious credit from Delia. She included herself; she pulled over herself what she could of Bayard's encomium.

Once Delia came to visit them, bringing the twins with her. Ella was in a flutter. She said that Bayard said that Delia had "lost count." By that, Ella explained, Bayard meant that Delia wasn't the "looker" she had been. Ella dressed it up in such a way that one was constrained to believe that Bayard had subtly complimented her.

Bayard was very gay while Delia was in the house. They danced together, and one night he took Delia to the movies, while Ella stayed at home with the twins.

"Bayard is so careful of me," she told a neighbor. "It's just ridiculous! He wouldn't let me go with them last night, because he says I have overdone on account of Delia and the babies being here. I'm just going to *make* her stay the month out, though, even if Bayard does think I can't take care of myself."

Bayard talked a lot to Delia, too. The first time Ella knew that he was going to travel for his concern next year was when he told it to Delia.

"Bayard saves me from everything unpleasant," she said. "He tells Delia things he has always kept from me. Of course, she's only his sister-in-law."

Ella had a habit of explaining matters which were nobody's rightful concern.

After Delia left, Bayard was taciturn again. He came home of an evening, read the evening paper all through, yawned and stretched and smoked, and went to bed. Ella informed incurious neighbors that Bayard never had any rest except when he was with her.

"I have a tranquillizing influence on him," she gave forth.

Once Bayard was reported to her as having been seen with a girl at the movies in a neighboring town. Ella was hard put to it, momentarily. Then:

"Oh, yes!" she cried, with a sort of avid enthusiasm. "That was the night he came home an hour earlier than usual. He was

done up. He had had to take the manager's wife to see a picture the manager was interested in. Bayard didn't want to tire me out by phoning me and getting me to come over. Business is so *tactical* nowadays. It's awful, though, to have a husband who treats you like a baby!"

Her informant mercifully omitted to tell her that Bayard and the girl had been seen in a town thirty miles away, and that Bayard couldn't reasonably have conceived the notion of getting Ella over there. Ella would so eagerly have provided an alibi.

After five years, Bayard was rather better-looking than he had been, while poor Ella was not nearly so good-looking as she had been.

Bayard had filled out. His black hair was sleek and interestingly streaked with gray at the temples. His full lips were firmer. He carried himself better. The Woodling home and the Woodling money had given him a background, made him sure of himself. He was rather good at the "glad hand" and the mixing. He was what is known as a good mixer. He was not unpopular with men, and he was very popular indeed with women.

He dressed with more dash and go than formerly, and wore his clothes rather well. Ella had given him a diamond ring, and he had a shepherd's plaid suit. In summer he wore white flannels striped with black, and a "genuine" Panama hat. He had a car of his own, or practically his own. He played poker now and then. He was quite a good fellow.

Ella, in her teens, had had a certain frail appearance of prettiness—mere youthful prettiness and nothing more. Her hair had been soft, and so had her lips. Her figure had been willowy, appealing. She had had little airs and graces, and her eager, supplicating manner had been not quite so tiring, not quite so absurd.

Her hair was dull now, and she didn't fuss with it much. Her lips were thinner, and she held them tightly together, as if she were withholding the most mysterious and vital information. As nothing either mysterious or vital had ever been known to issue from her lips, their compression suggested, rather than mystery, an increasingly inhibited maturity.

Her figure was inclined to primness about the house, and fussiness when out. She wore little bows and furbelows, and imitation beads and pins. She still used



the mediocre perfume, and it was singularly out of place. She had no babies, and she looked undernourished, deprived. She was somehow starving, and she starved unpleasantly.

She still said "Bayard says," and "Bayard thinks"; but as he never said anything to her, and as she had no slightest inkling of his thoughts, her affirmations were tinged with affectation and insincerity. She befooled nobody save herself.

### III

Of course there came a night when Bayard didn't come home. He omitted to leave a note on the pincushion, not being even conventionally imaginative; but he did write Ella a note from New York, telling her that he wasn't coming back any more; that he had met "the one woman," and that she, Ella, could do as she saw fit about it. She could divorce him if she wanted to, or otherwise—it didn't make any particular difference to him. He was sorry, but there it was.

It was a brief enough note to send to poor Ella Woodling, with her passion for detail.

Poor Ella Woodling! She did the only thing she could do. She expanded upon the simplicity of Bayard's nature; the childlike qualities that had made him prey for the wiles of a scarlet woman; the struggle he must have had with himself, with his better nature; the fact that many men—great men, indeed—have fallen from grace, even as her Bayard.

She recounted over and over again all the things he had said to her during courtship and marriage, as so many proofs positive of his great and extraordinary love for her, despite the pitiful thing he had done in a moment of abandonment. She said he had asked her to watch over him, and there, she hadn't done it! The fault was hers!

One felt that Bayard had implored Ella to accompany him on his tours of demonstration, and that she having failed him, having withdrawn from him the sustenance of her beloved presence, he had forthwith been sucked into a maelstrom. One was constrained to believe that Bayard's love for Ella still remained inviolate, and that this elopement, this episodic folly, was such an act as a child might commit, in a moment of fitful temper, against a beloved parent.

Ella grew older, though. She didn't go out much. Her resources were pretty heavily drained. She was never questioned, never laid open to the need of explanation, but apparently she felt that she must explain, must live in a perpetual state of justification.

People forgot Bayard. After five years the biggest stone dropped into the puddle of notoriety ceases to leave visible circles. Nobody gave Bayard Furman a thought save Bayard Furman's wife—for of course she didn't divorce him.

She gave him all her thoughts. She put his clothes away in camphor the spring after he went away, and every spring and fall thereafter she took them out and went over them to note their condition. She kept his desk dusted and his unimportant papers in order. She had her marriage certificate reframed in dull gold leaf, then coming into vogue for the framing of pictures. She still referred to him as "my husband."

Neither she nor any one else in town had the most remote idea as to where he had gone, where he was living, or what he was doing. The woman's identity was also a mystery. One felt that she could not be very important, or she would not be living for so long a period of time, and so anomalously, with Bayard Furman. He was a good mixer; he had the "glad hand"—but there one left him.

### IV

THEN, at the end of eight years, as abruptly as he had departed, Bayard Furman returned.

He was terrifically changed—an old man. Beside him, Ella's faded prettiness seemed evidence of a triumphant and enduring youth. He had been florid, well filled out, and prosperous-looking when he went away; he was stooped and haggard and thin when he returned. His clothes, none too well cared for, hung loosely upon him. He had a persistent cough.

He didn't smoke—the doctors had advised him not to. He didn't work. He said that he had to "lay off for a spell"—doctor's orders. This left him little or nothing to do but sit on the porch of the Woodling house and look, with some furtiveness, up and down the road. Stripped of his youth, of his "glad hand," of his shepherd's plaid suit, there was little enough of Bayard Furman.

Ella was simply effervescent. She was justified. She was vindicated. She was crowned. What had she told every one? What had she always said? Had any woman anywhere, ever, received so conclusive, so complete, so final a demonstration of the undying, unquenchable, inextinguishable love of the one man for the supremely one woman?

One could not but admit that the spoils of war were undoubtedly Ella's.

The few hours she could spare from her necessary ministrations to Bayard were spent in describing, with particulars, the great moment of Bayard's return. Wasn't it "just like a book"? Wasn't it "for all the world like a play"?

Poor, dear Bayard! All these years he had been hungering and thirsting for her. Who was she to blame a man so faithful in his heart of hearts, so righteous in his soul?

People said that Bayard looked pretty bad. Some few of us tried to make her see what was so evident—the poor, few days in which she could exploit him, in which she could triumph, before her weeds set in; but she didn't see it. She didn't seem to see much change.

She said they were having a "second honeymoon" before Bayard got "back to work again." She wouldn't be surprised, she said, if he should "take up" the Old-

field Motor Company again. She thought she would give a party for him the night before he went back to work. She was making some new curtains and finishing her runner for the sideboard. Bayard had always "liked things nice." She wanted to know why the folks didn't drop in.

Poor Ella! But we said "poor Bayard," too, now. After all, life is pretty cruel. Bayard had offended, but now he was beaten, trampled under foot. We didn't want to side with life, which is so much stronger than he was. There was nothing for it but to listen to Ella.

She hadn't much more to go. A couple of months passed, and then, one morning, the shades were drawn in the Woodling house. Late in the afternoon Delia Woodling arrived, with the twins and three little girls.

We knew that Bayard had made his last trip.

People don't say "poor Ella Woodling" so much nowadays. She is pretty well content. Wasn't she fully vindicated in her own sight and in the sight of all others? She wore her weeds fitly, mourning a husband as loving as he had been beloved.

Only one or two of us knew that the other woman had kicked poor Bayard out and sent him off to die. Home was better than a hospital ward.

#### BEETHOVEN, DEAF

At first, when silence settled her vast calm  
About me, like the hush of stellar space,  
I missed the full voice of the orchestra,  
I missed the rustle of the million leaves  
That toss on many tree tops in the sun,  
The infinite, shrill music of the grass  
When evening insects tune their serenades;  
And it was strange as death to mark the lips  
Of fellow beings move in speechless speech  
While all the cries and voices of the street  
Fell silent as if life itself had died.

But then, as strangeness wore to daily wont,  
There grew within me, like a miracle,  
Not music as it strikes the outward ear,  
But music's self, heard in the soul alone;  
And now I guess how God felt when He called  
Creation forth, in answer to His thought,  
From emptiness and void and the vast dark,  
And all the music of the spheres awoke!

Harry Kemp

# These Days

SHOWING HOW UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE IT IS TO WIN PUBLIC  
RECOGNITION BY DESERVING IT

By William Slavens McNutt

A REAL artist ain't got a chance in the profession these days. It's awful—honest! The other day, when I seen in the papers where Georgie Cohan said he was going to quit, I says to myself when I read it:

"I don't blame him a bit," I says to myself. "I know just how he feels!"

It don't do you a bit of good to be a hard-working girl in the show business these days, and to pass up the late suppers and keep your looks and rehearse your stuff a lot and try to make good. That don't get you anywhere at all. You got to shoot a millionaire and kill him these days, or you can't get a week's booking, even if you was Sarah Bernhardt herself. It's awful!

These commercial managers, what do they care about art? They don't care whether a girl can sing or dance, or whether she's got personality, or knows anything about the business. If you send poisoned candy to somebody's husband, or get stabbed by somebody's wife, why, right away you're a star. These managers, they don't care any more what a girl does on the stage; it's what she does off that counts.

And the things you got to do nowadays! It ain't like it used to be, when a lady could get some fake jewelry stole, or get some guy to wait for her at the stage door and slap his face, and have him pinched, and they'd pay some attention to it. Nowadays, I give you my word, it's terrible! If you want to get some publicity, you got to do something that you'll get life for if your lawyer ain't on to his job.

You know it's got so now that all these foreign countries and politicians are getting all the publicity. You know what I mean—Ireland, and Lloyd George, and Japan,

and all them things. That's all you see in the newspapers any more.

Last fall business was rotten. I got five weeks of split time up through New England, doing three shows a day in them hick burgs for one hundred and twenty-five a week. Think of that! Me, Nannette Lavalley, that's played on the big time and was headlined at the Palace once!

I was just as good as headlined, anyhow. Irene Franklin was playing there that week, and of course they give her the spot; but who was it that stopped the show? You ask anybody that seen me that week. I had them falling off their seats, honest!

I was booked to play at the Colonial the next week, and I went so good at the Palace that somebody on that bill—I ain't mentioning no names, but somebody that had a drag—went and got me canned, so I didn't get a chance to play at the Colonial. That's how good I was!

Well, last fall I got this piece of small time up through New England. I wouldn't have took it if I'd had a dime to my name. I give you my word I was that mortified! I says to my agent, I says to him:

"Listen," I says. "You tell these people up to the booking office," I says, "that the only reason I do this is because I've been laying off all summer taking a vacation, and I need this stuff for rehearsals before I come back to the big time," I says to him. "Don't you let them think," I says, "that I'm taking this for the money there is in it."

"Oh, I'm sure they'd never think that about you, Miss Lavalley," my agent says to me.

He was a nice guy, my agent. He didn't have any business sense, because look how long he was booking me, and what did he

ever get me? Nothing; but he was a nice guy.

So I went up in New England doing the split weeks, and Tex Ripley was on the bill with me. I don't know yet if I'd 'a' fell for him so hard if it hadn't been for them little towns. You know how it is in them little towns—you got to do something, and there's nothing to do.

Maybe I would 'a' got to liking him pretty well anyhow, because I always did like cowboys. I never met any before I met him, but I always liked them. You know what I mean—I would 'a' liked them if I'd 'a' met them.

Tex was one of them kind you read about in stories. He done an act with a rope—you know, like Will Rogers. He was from a place down in Texas they called the Big Bend. He was kind of nice, but he was no actor. He just went on and done his stuff with the rope, and never said nothing. He didn't know how to pull no hokum—no wise cracks—no singing nor nothing, only just the rope stuff.

He was a nice-looking kid, too, only kind of clumsy. As I said, we got to running around together in them small towns, where there was nothing else to do, and I got stuck on him for fair.

I was kind of sore at myself, too.

"Listen, Nan," I says to myself. "This big hick ain't going to do you no good in the profession," I says to myself. "I'm not one that would marry for money," I says. "I believe in love and all that; but why not wait and maybe fall in love with some fellow that's got money, or can do me some good in the profession? Just because you're sentimental and got high ideals," I says to myself, "that's no reason you should go and be a sucker!"

So I kept away from him for a few days; but them towns! Oh, them towns! Well, I guess I would 'a' fell for him anyhow. Love is funny that way, ain't it?

If you're going to get it, you can't help yourself. So I kept on and we got engaged, and then I says to him, I says; "Now what are we going to do?"

"Why, we'll get married!" he says.

He was simple that way. If there was something to do, right away he wanted to go do it.

"But listen, deary," I says to him. "Things are going bad with me now," I says; "and what about you? You ain't got nothing but an honest heart and a trick

rope. What 'll we do for a living if we get married?"

"Oh, we'll get along somehow," he says.

Don't it get your goat a little bit when everything's all wrong and somebody just grins and says not to worry, because it will turn out all right? It does mine.

"Now if you was a manager or a rich fellow, or something like that," I says to him, "why, you could back me and everything would be lovely. Or if I was a star, like I should be, with the ability I got, why, then I'd be making a lot of money, and you could travel with me and do your stuff with the rope while I was changing."

He got a little bit sore.

"Maybe you'd rather have a rich fellow or a manager or something," he says.

"Sure I would!" I says; "but that's just my luck. I couldn't go and fall in love with somebody like that," I says. "I got to fall for you!"

"Maybe you'd like to call it off," he says.

"What's the use of being silly?" I tells him. "Of course I'd like to call it off; but here I've went and fell in love with you, and I can't. It's just my luck!"

"Don't you think I got any pride?" he asks me.

"Maybe you have," I comes back at him; "but tell me this—what can you buy with it?"

"I certainly must love you an awful lot," he says to me.

"Why?" I asks him.

"Because if I didn't," he says, "I'd 'a' told you what I ought to tell you long before this, and I'd be on my way," he says.

"Listen, deary," I says to him. "Don't get sore. I got just as many ideals as you got," I says to him; "but I got to live, just the same as you have, and I ain't going to be the half of no cheap vaudeville team all my life, rattling around in the sticks in the small time and living in bum hotels," I says to him. "I've seen too many of them," I says. "I love you and all that," I says to him, "but I can live without you until my luck gets better."

"Well," he says to me, "if you think I'm going to be a tame lap dog, trotting around on a chain, and sitting up on my hind legs to do tricks for a couple of minutes while you're off changing your dress, you're making a mistake!" he says.

"Deary," I says to him, "there's many a man would think themselves lucky to



have a chance to be partner with a girl that's going to be as big a hit as I am when I get what's coming to me."

"Yes!" he says. "And there's many a man would think themselves lucky if they'd get life instead of getting hung," he says; "but I ain't one of them men."

I didn't know what to do then. I felt bad, and cried, and he hugged me and said he was sorry he'd acted like he did.

"Listen, little girl," he says. "Let's you and me get out of this stage stuff and go back to Texas," he says. "I can make a living there, and we'll be regular people again."

"How can you make a living?" I asks him.

"Well, I think I know a guy that 'll stake me to a ranch," he says.

For a minute I kind o' thought that would be nice. I've seen some ranches in the movies that I think maybe I'd like to live on.

"Will you have a lot of cowboys," I says to him, "and thousands of cattle, and make a lot of money?"

"No," he says. "We'll have a two-room dobe shack, and a lot of debts, and a couple of dozen no-account, ornery cows to start on," he says. "We'll also have a lot of honest hard work, and enough to eat while we're doing it; and if we're lucky, maybe some day we'll have plenty of dough. What do you say, Nannette?" he says to me.

"Listen, deary," I says to him. "If you think you've fell in love with a biscuit-shooter in some cheap hash house, that would be glad to get any kind of a man that would make her his wife, you're mistaken," I says. "I'm an artist," I says to him.

"I know you are," he says; "but it's funny—I keep right on loving you just the same!"

"Well," I says to him, "we got to use our brains."

So we did. We thought up a lot of schemes, and none of them was any good. So we finished our time and went back to New York.

"Maybe, when we get back to New York, things will be better," says Tex.

But we got back to New York and things was worse. Then, luckily for me, Marie Featherstone was in a taxi that run into a street car, and she got her leg broke, so I got a chance to go on and take her place

for a couple of weeks around town, or I don't know what I would have done.

## II

WHILE I was playing them two weeks I met Eddie Odell, and he fell for me just the same way I'd fell for Tex Ripley.

I was eating my lunch in at Childs's with Rosie Goldstein, who was one of the O'Grady Sisters that was working with me on the bill then, and this Eddie Odell came in. She knew him, and she introduces me to him. He was a swell looker and a fine dresser, and the way he fell for me! He hadn't been sitting there two minutes when he says to me:

"Say, sister," he says, "you're some chicken!"

I could tell by the way he said it that he meant it, but I pretended I thought he was kidding.

"Listen, Rosie!" I says. "What does your friend do? Is he an automobile salesman or something?"

"Say, you want to be nice to him," Rosie says. "He's a press agent. He can get your picture in the newspapers, if he wants to."

Well, honest! For a minute I thought I'd choke! Right away I says to myself: "Your luck has changed!"

A press agent! Can you beat that? Just running into him that way in Childs's—didn't that look like it was meant? And him taking to me the way he did, right off—didn't that look like a sign? I ask you!

So I began right away making a kind of a play for him.

"I suppose you say that to every girl you meet," I says to him.

"No, on the level, I don't," he says. "Ask Rosie," he says. "Did I ever say that to you, Rosie?"

Rosie says no, he never says that to her, and we got to talking and kidding and laughing, and he fell for me hard.

"Say, sister," he says to me, while we was drinking our coffee, "I bet I could do something for you. Where are you playing this week?"

"Up at the Cordovan," I says.

"Ain't that a shame?" he says. "A girl like you doing three a day up in that dump, and some that ain't got half your looks or talent getting by for big dough on Broadway!"

Ain't it funny he should say it like that? I don't know how many times them very

words had gone through my mind, and here he was saying it just the way I thought it.

"Well, of course," I says to him, "there's reasons for that," I says. "You being a press agent, you probably know what I mean. I ain't saying anything," I says, "but there's some things that if she's a lady a girl won't do to get ahead, no matter what happens. Listen," I says to him. "I may be playing three a day in a dump and all that, but I'm a lady," I says to him. "I got that to be thankful for!"

"Sure you're a lady," he says. "I like 'em that way. You think I'd fall for you if you wasn't a lady? Well, I should say not!"

"I only just met you," I says, "and you never can tell about men," I says. "You know how men is."

"Sure!" he says. "Some men is that way, but I'm different," he says. "If a girl ain't a lady, it don't make no difference what kind of a looker she is—not for mine!"

I begun to like him a little when he said that. I always did take to fellows that felt that way about women—you know, sort of refined.

"Listen, sister," he says. "Suppose I come up to the shop to-night and take a look at your act," he says. "Then I could meet you afterward and we could frame something to get you some publicity. That's all you need," he says. "Just a couple of good flashy front-page yarns, with your picture, and you'd be dragging down fifteen hundred a week easy. You know you're not like some that haven't got the stuff. Once you get started right, you can keep on going on what you got. If only you had somebody like me to get you publicity—why, say! There's no limit to where you'd go to!"

You could 'a' knocked me down with a feather. To think of going into Childs's like that and running into a press agent, and him falling for me like he did!

### III

I MET Tex and told him about my good luck. He got mad.

"Is that so?" he says. "So this little two-legged whiffle-tit is coming up to the shop to-night to see your act, is he? That's fine! I'll have a chance to meet him and teach him the Texas national anthem—'Two Black Eyes and a Bloody Nose,'" he says.

"Tex," I says to him, "if you can't be a gentleman, at least lay off and leave me a chance to be a lady," I says. "This fellow don't mean anything wrong. It's money in his pocket if he puts me over, ain't it?" I says. "Here we been scheming and thinking of a way we could break into the real dough, so we can get married and still be comfortable, and here's the chance to do it, and right away you want to start a fight!"

"Well," he says, "I ain't seen this guy, of course, but he sounds like nothing but a whistle to me. I'm not going to have no pop-eyed little horn-tooter put nothing over on you!"

"But, Tex," I says, "he ain't going to put nothing over on me. Listen, deary," I says to him. "You trust me, don't you?"

"Sure I trust you," he says; "but I'm going to stick around and keep my eyes open," he says.

"Now, Tex," I says to him, "if I wasn't a lady, you know where I'd be, don't you? I wouldn't need no press agent to help me out," I says. "I'd have the reporters up to interview me, and my picture in the papers, and my limousine, and all them things. Now I got a chance to get all that and still be a lady. I know this show business better than you do," I says to him. "Now be good and do like I tell you, won't you?"

He says he would, and that night Eddie Odell seen my act and come back stage afterward.

"Sister," he says, "you knocked them kicking! You had them rolling around in the aisles. I was scared some of them people out there was going to laugh themselves to death. You was a riot, kid! Of course, you don't go so well here, because your stuff's over the heads of the bums that come to a dump like this; but if you do that same stuff, headlining the big time—say! Just a little of the right kind of publicity for you, and about six months in the big time, and you can kiss the two-a-day good-by. You're too good for this stuff. You ought to be starring in musical comedy—that's where you ought to be," he says. "And if you get the right kind of publicity in musical comedy for a couple of years, you'd be stepping right into the legit, just like Dave Warfield. Do you know you remind me of Dave Warfield a little? Not in the same way, of course—I don't mean

that; but you've got that same sort of something—get me?"

You could 'a' knocked me down with a feather. I've always had the feeling that I could get away with the sob stuff like Warfield does—only playing a woman, of course; and think of his having the same idea! It was kind of uncanny.

"That's true enough, Mr. Odell," I says to him. "Now how am I going to get the publicity?"

"Well," he says, "we got to think." He thinks for a minute. "Was you born down South?"

"No," I says, "I was born in Buffalo. Why?"

"Well," he says, "if you was born down South, we might put it over that you was a society dame there, and your folks was an old family, and you went on the stage under an assumed name to pay off the mortgage, or send your brother through college, or get an operation performed on your crippled sister, or something like that. I don't know, though—come to think about it, I'm afraid that's been used. We got to think!"

We sat down and thought, and pretty soon he jumps up and says:

"I got it!" he says. "Sure-fire stuff! I'll call up all the papers in town, but I won't tell them who I am. I'll pretend I'm some guy that's tipping them off to a good story, see? I'll tell them your great-grandfather was a nobleman in France, or Russia, and got run out for leading a revolution or something like that, see? And I'll tell them he came to this country, and all he brought with him was some of these—what do you call them?—crown jewels. I'll tell them he never would part with these jewels, and they've been kept in the family ever since. I'll say you was the last of the family, and you had them; but you went on working for a living because you was too proud to sell them. Then I'll tell them how last night somebody bust into your room and stole the jewels. When the reporters come up to ask you about it, you can pull a lot of stuff and give them your picture, and you'll be over, see? Of course this has been done before, in a way, but where we'll get them is this—when I call them up, I won't tell them I'm a press agent, see? I'll pretend I'm some guy that's tipping them off to a good story, so they won't get wise to its being a publicity stunt—get me?"

So I went home, and the next morning I got up early and waited for the reporters. None of them came.

By and by Eddie Odell came up, and I asked him where was the reporters.

"Aw," he says, "them newspaper guys make me tired! They ain't got no sense. They don't know a good story when they see it. I called them all up and told them this stuff, and didn't tell them I was a press agent, and do you know what? They just give me the horse laugh. They think they're wise, they do!"

"Well," I says, "what are we going to do now to get me the publicity?"

"Well," he says, "we got to think."

#### IV

So we sat down and thought awhile. While we was sitting there thinking, Tex Ripley came in. I introduced him to Eddie Odell, but of course I didn't tell him me and Tex was engaged. Not that I cared if he knew, but I says to myself:

"What's the use?"

You know what Tex done right away when I introduced him? He says to Eddie Odell, he says:

"I suppose you know that Miss Lavalley and me are engaged to be married, don't you?"

Can you beat that? Them Western fellows is always like that. You know—they're terribly frank and open. That's their character.

Eddie Odell looked kind of funny for a minute, and then he says:

"No," he says, "I didn't know it, but I'm glad to hear it. Congratulations!" he says. "Miss Lavalley will be a credit to any guy."

"All right," Tex says. "We'll start from that."

"Well," I says, "the question is, how am I going to get this publicity?"

"Well," says Eddie Odell, "we got to think."

So we all sat down and thought. Pretty soon Eddie jumps up and he says:

"Listen—I got it! Have you got any money?" he says to me.

Tex began to laugh.

"I thought so," he says. "You see, Nan," he says to me, "if you got an engagement ring, you got to have money."

"Say, listen," Eddie Odell says. "I didn't come here to be insulted. If you feel that way about it, I'm going."

"Oh, now, wait," I says. "Please wait, Mr. Odell. Don't get sore at Tex. He's just a cowboy, and he's got funny ideas about things. Don't pay no attention to him."

"Certainly not," says Tex. "Don't bother to pay no attention to me, Mr. Odell. If things gets so I need to attract your attention, I'll do it. Don't worry about that!"

So Eddie sat down again, though you could see he was kind of sore at Tex.

"Well," he says, "if there's going to be a quarrel because I mentioned the matter of money, I know a way you can get across without it costing you a dime. I tell you what you can do—you can shoot this fellow you're engaged to, and then we'll cook up some story about why you done it, and that 'll get you across in fine shape. That's sure-fire stuff, and it won't cost you a dime."

"Shoot me!" Tex says. "Where do you get that stuff?"

"Oh, I don't mean for her to kill you," Eddie says. "She'll shoot you in the fleshy part of the leg, or something like that, where it won't hurt much. Just as long as she shoots you some place—that's good enough."

"A man in your business certainly does have to have brains!" Tex says. "Anybody that could think up that bright stunt ought to be able to think of something else just as good!"

"Well," says Eddie, "I got a sure-fire idea, but it's going to take a little money to put it over, and when I spoke of money you got sore."

"I wasn't sore," Tex said. "I just laughed—that's all. Let's have the other idea."

"Well," Eddie says, "you know I make my living by thinking up ideas. If you ain't got the money to put this over, there's no use my telling it to you. Maybe you'd go and slip it to somebody else, and I wouldn't get a dime out of it."

You know, of course, I did have a little money stuck away. I bought a thousand dollars' worth of Liberty bonds during the war, and I'd kept them.

"Now," I says to myself, when I done it, "I'll forget I got them until some time maybe I'll get sick and have to go to the hospital, and then I'll have something."

So I'd stuck them away and just pretended I didn't have them.

"If you can get some publicity that 'll put you in line for fifteen hundred a week by spending this dough now, it's silly to be stingy with it," I says to myself. "There's such a thing as watching the pennies so close that there'll be a dollar lying right alongside of you, where you could pick it up, and you won't be able to see it."

So I says to Eddie:

"Supposing I could get a little money somewhere, what good would it do me?" I says. "And how much would I have to have?"

"Well," he says, "I'll tell you. I got this idea from a moving picture I seen once, and it's a peach. I know a guy here in town by the name of Shorty Gregg, who's an old train robber, but he's going on the level now. We could get him to help us out with this thing for about—let me see—for about—say, how much could you get hold of?"

"How much would I have to get hold of?" I asks him.

"Well," he says, "let me think. I suppose we would have to have about—say, how much do you think you could raise?"

"Well," I says to him, "if I was sure I was going to get plenty of publicity out of it, why, maybe I could get pretty near a thousand dollars."

"Ain't that funny?" Eddie says. "That's just the amount I was thinking of! I'd have to do some talking to get Shorty to do it for that, but he's an awful good friend of mine. If I went to him and told him I was doing this for some one I was pretty fond of, I think I could get him to do it for just about a thousand dollars."

That struck me kind of funny—you know, me having just a thousand dollars, and Eddie Odell thinking all the time he could get this guy for just about that much. Didn't that look just like it was meant? I thought so.

That kind o' decided me. So I says to him, I says:

"Well, if you can promise me I can get the publicity, I'll promise you to dig up about a thousand dollars."

"Well," Eddie says, "I'll tell you the scheme. It's a peach! I know a place on the railroad, about thirty miles out of town, where there's a lonely crossing. I'll get this guy Shorty Gregg to go out there and fix up something on the track that would wreck the train if it ran into it. He'll pile up a lot of ties, or cut a tree down so it 'll



lay across the track, or something like that. Then we'll hire an automobile, and we'll be out that way having a picnic, see? We'll be coming home, and right near the railroad track we'll run out of gasoline, see? That's easy. All we got to do is to stop the car near the place and drain the tank. Then I'll go back with a can to get some gasoline, and while—oh, I suppose you'll want to have your friend Tex along with you, won't you?"

"Well," I says, "if he won't be in the way."

"I may be in the way," Tex says, "but I'll be along. You can take a little bet on that!"

"All right," Eddie says. "Then me and Mr. Ripley will start back toward the next town and leave you with the car. Of course we won't go far. We'll stick around; but that 'll be the story we'll tell—that we started back to the town to get some gasoline and left you there, see? This time of year there's a train from town comes along there just about dusk. After we leave to go back for gasoline, Nannette Lavalley will get out of the car and be just walking around, and she'll happen to notice this stuff on the track. Right away she thinks about the express train that's due in a few minutes."

"How does she know the express train's due in a few minutes?" Tex asks.

"Well, she's an actress, ain't she? She's traveled on that road. She's taken that train out of town before. Can't she remember what time it leaves New York and about what time it gets to that place?"

"All right," says Tex. "Go ahead!"

"Well," says Eddie, "she thinks about the train coming along, so she runs down the track and waves a lantern and stops the train and saves all them passengers. Do you get it?"

"How does she come to have a lantern?" Tex asks him.

"You ain't got any imagination," Eddie says. "When we stop the car and drain the tank, we'll bust something so that the lights will go out. Then we'll light the lantern, see?"

"How do we come to have a lantern along with us?" Tex wants to know.

"Don't be dumb," Eddie says. "We got it along in case something happens to our lights."

"All right," Tex says. "She stops the train. Then what?"

"Don't be dumb," Eddie says. "Can't you see it? Broadway! Electric lights a foot high! Miss Lavalley, the girl that saved a thousand lives!"

"Trains don't carry a thousand people," Tex says.

"Don't be dumb," Eddie says. "That's just a way of saying it. Miss Lavalley, the girl that saved a thousand lives!"

"A dollar a life," Tex says. "It's buying them cheap, at that; but what's the sense of giving this train-robber friend of yours all that money just to put a little log on the track?"

"Don't be dumb," Eddie says. "Look at the risk he runs! Suppose anything happens and he was caught doing it—what would he get?"

"About a thousand days to put along with his thousand dollars," Tex says. "And what do you get out of this?"

"I don't get anything out of it," Eddie says. "Of course, if the stunt goes over, and Miss Lavalley gets her big headlining, why, then, if she's satisfied with the way I handle her stuff, she can hire me as her press agent regular and pay me so much a week. I'm gambling on this thing the same as she is."

"Just the same," Tex says; "only she wastes her thousand dollars and all you waste is your time. I think it's the bunk, if you ask me; but go ahead. I'm kind of out of my territory up here. I don't savvy all the rules of the game, and I may be wrong. I'll ride along with you on this thing, if you want me to; but just to keep the record straight, I want to repeat I think it's the bunk!"

"I'll tell you what I think, Mr. Odell," I says. "I think this was meant from the beginning, the way this thing come up—me meeting you in Childs's and all. It looks to me like it's just been brought about. I'll get the money for you," I says.

"I'll bet I'll live to see the day when you'll be playing *Portia* on Broadway with your own company!" Eddie says.

You could 'a' knocked me over with a feather when he says that. I seen Julia Marlowe once, and while I was watching her that very thought come into my mind. I says to myself, while I was watching her:

"I bet I could do that, if I got the chance, just as good as she does—maybe better."

Imagine Eddie saying just the same thing! Wasn't it uncanny?

"There's no limit to where you can go in the show business, once you get the right kind of start," Eddie says. "You can go anywhere!"

He went out to hunt up Shorty Gregg.

"Your friend can go anywhere, too, for all of me," Tex says to me. "I could give him directions, if I had a mind to, but I won't," he says. "He can go anywhere," he says; "but I hope him and me don't happen to be going there together. You'd be surprised," he says to me, "how happy I could be even if I never did see that guy again. I bet I could go right on digesting my victuals if he was to fall down and die right on the sidewalk. You know," he says, "I may be wrong, but just remember what I'm telling you—I think it's the bunk!"

## V

EDDIE got hold of Shorty Gregg and made all the arrangements. I give him the thousand dollars to give to Shorty and to pay for the automobile that we was going to pretend to be going for a picnic in.

This fellow Gregg went out and looked at the place that Eddie Odell told him about, and found where he could cut down a big tree right near the crossing so it would fall across the track. They fixed it up that he would cut the tree halfway through during the afternoon, and then, after we stopped there by the crossing, and Tex and Eddie pretended to start back for the gasoline, he'd cut it the rest of the way through. When I heard the crash, I was to go see what had happened. I was to see the tree on the track then, and pull off my stunt.

The time come, and we rode out into the country, pretending we was on a picnic. We had dinner in a little hick town out there, and then rode back that evening to the place where Shorty was going to block the track. We stopped the car near the crossing, and Eddie let all the gasoline run out of the tank. Then they got the can out and started back up the road, leaving me alone in the car.

I was sort of scared. It was getting dark, and it was awful lonesome there.

Just after Tex and Eddie left the car, I heard the noise in the woods where Shorty Gregg was finishing chopping the tree through. Then I heard the thing fall. I got out of the car, walked down the track a little piece, and seen the tree lying there.

I run back then to get the lantern, and I was more scared than ever.

"What if I should faint?" I thought to myself. "What if a wind starts to come up and blows out the light?"

But then I says to myself:

"Nobody ever got to the heights without pulling off some kind of a nervy stunt. A thousand lives depends on you," I says to myself. "Moreover, if you don't make good, your thousand dollars is gone for nothing, and probably you'll just be a ham all the rest of your life!"

So I got the lantern and run back beyond where the tree was, and waited. Pretty soon I heard the train coming. I stood in the middle of the track and waved the lantern. The thing whistled and begun to slow down. When it got a little piece from where I was, it stopped.

I started to run down toward where it was, so as to give them my name and let them know who saved them; but then I got scared again. I heard awful yells, and noises that sounded like shooting.

"I wonder if they think I'm a train robber, and they're shooting at me?" I says to myself. "Well, I don't care if they are," I says. "I've sunk a thousand dollars in this scheme already, and I'm going to let 'em know who stopped this train and saved all them lives, if I die for it!"

So I kept on running down toward the train, and I heard a lot more yells and noises like shooting. By the time I got down by the train there was a crowd of people piling out of the coaches, all yelling and shouting. I seen a man in a uniform—a conductor or a brakeman or something—so I grabbed him.

"I'm Nannette Lavalley," I says to him. "I'm the one who stopped this train and saved all these lives!"

"You what?" he says.

"I stopped the train," I says, "and saved all these lives. I'm Nannette Lavalley, the—"

"Oh, is that so?" he says, grabbing me by the arm. "Well, if you're the one who stopped this train, you've got a nerve showing up now. What's the game?"

"Let go of my arm," I says. "I stopped the train and saved all them lives!"

"I'll let go of you," he says, "just as soon as I can find a cop to take hold of you!"

I got more scared than ever, then, and I begun to cry a little. Another fellow in

uniform come running up then, and he says:

"All right, Joe! No damage done—not a passenger hit nor a dime lost. Some wild ass of the prairies came busting out of the woods just as those birds were jumping off to make their get-away, and he cleaned them for a fare-ye-well. Only one of the gang got away, and all he got away with was his life!"

"I think I got one of the gang here," the fellow that was holding me says. "This girl come to me and claimed she stopped the train."

"Oh, that must be the girl this wild man was telling me about," the other fellow says. "He told me his lady friend found where they'd dropped a tree across the track, and waved the lantern to stop us."

"Sure, that's me," I says. "I'm Nannette Lavalley, the girl that saved a thousand lives!"

"I think she's a little nutty," the fellow that was holding me says.

## VI

THEY took me down the track a piece, and through a big crowd of passengers that was all yelling and cheering somebody; and there was Tex standing there, sort of laughing. He had a revolver in his hand that smoke was coming out of. I broke loose from the fellow that was holding me, and run to Tex. I threw my arms around him and begun to cry.

"Don't let it worry you, kid," Tex says, patting me on the head. "You'll understand it all in time. Just keep quiet and let me do the talking."

You know what? That crook, Shorty Gregg, had gone and tried to double-cross us. He had cut down that tree all right, like he was paid to, but you know what? He'd got some crooked friends of his to ride out on the train. When it stopped, he hopped on and helped them out, and they begun to rob the passengers. Can you beat that?

And you know what? They was going to grab what dough they could and run and leave me there, and Tex and Eddie Odell; and when the passengers and the train men come and found us, they was going to think we was part of the gang that didn't get away. Can you beat that?

And you know what? Tex thought all the time it was kind of funny, so instead of staying hid up the road with Eddie

Odell, he sneaked around and was down by the track when the train stopped. He had a gun with him, and he shot all them robbers but one. Can you beat that?

And you know what? Eddie Odell got scared when he heard the shooting, and skipped out. We never seen him again. Next year I met a girl with a dancing act that said she seen him waiting on table in a little hash house out in Omaha, near the station.

And you know what? All they said in the papers about me was less than two inches long, and they didn't use my picture at all!

And you know what? They used Tex's picture! Can you beat that? They told all about him—how he was a cowboy doing a rope act in vaudeville, and how he'd been a sheriff down in Texas, and what a wonderful brave man he was.

And you know what? The L. and M. people got hold of him and signed him up at a thousand a week headlining; and after a couple of weeks the Midnight Frivolities grabbed him for their roof show and give him twelve hundred. And look at him now! Can you beat it? Him headlining everywhere, and if there was a hundred weeks in the year he could work them all steady!

I will say for Tex he's nice about it. He owns up that he never would have got anywhere if it hadn't been for me. After he went to the Frivolities, and we got married, he says to me:

"Listen, kid! If you want to go on and do a little something while I'm off getting my breath between my rope dances, why, go ahead," he says. "It's all right with me—I ain't jealous; but you know what?" he says. "I think the best thing for you to do is to just stick around home and think up ideas. You got such wonderful ideas," he says, "and that's what counts these days!"

So I thought maybe that was the best thing for me to do, and I done it. He gets plenty of money now, and what do I care if people don't know that it was my idea that put him across? I should worry!

So I just stay home and think up ideas. Of course Tex don't need none of them now, because he's going so big; but if anything ever does happen, and he does need them, why, I'll have them all thought up. And it's what you got to have these days—ideas!

# Judith of Bohemia\*

A STORY OF ARTISTIC AND THEATRICAL LIFE IN LONDON

By Coralie Stanton and Heath Hosken

Authors of "Called to Judgment," "The Book of Ethel," "The Buried Torch," etc.

## XXXIII

WHEN Judy's dinner party took place, it was the merriest function that was ever held in Gino-ri's upstairs room. All Judy's old friends were bidden, and Vincent Stornaway and Bruce Gideon and Mr. Wyon. Dan, who was invited as a guest, insisted on helping the waiters; but he sang his Italian songs later on, and they danced and talked and pulled crackers and drank champagne until the night had merged into the next day.

Chummy talked a good deal with Bruce Gideon, and naturally all about Judy. She went home and battled with her thoughts. She understood now much that had puzzled her. She understood it since she had found Judy and Alan together, and had discovered that they loved each other.

She remembered how strangely Alan had behaved about Judy and Mr. Gideon—how violent he had been, how he had even asked her to warn her friend against the man. At the time she had thought him a little unreasonable. Now she understood that he had been wildly jealous of Gideon.

But now, of course, everything would come right in time. Alan would come back, and he and Judy would meet. Neither of them dreamed that Chummy had discovered their secret. Time would do the rest. She had only to play her part.

Dear little Judy! She would have sacrificed herself for her friend, and Alan would have sacrificed himself to his word of honor. What a good thing she had found out! How glad she was—how glad!

At this point poor Chummy got into bed and cried herself to sleep.

Judy was at Brighton on the first Sunday in December. She had gone down to

see if she could find any living relatives of her mother, who had been a native of the seaside town. She was so overflowing with generous spirit that she could not find enough people to share her success. Money was a splendid thing when one could give it away to people who needed it.

She had come across one elderly and very impecunious couple. The husband was a distant cousin of her mother, and he had been a scene-shifter at the theater until he injured his spine. They lived on a very scanty pension.

Judy was in despair because the shops were shut; but she made them take money, and she had a splendid dinner sent in from a hotel. She sat with them and delighted them with her high spirits and her laughter and her account of her wonderful life, which to them was like a fairy tale.

She went for a walk when she left them. She had about two hours before the train left for London. She walked on until she came to the end of a street, and then climbed a steep path that led up to the grassy hills above the town.

And, to her amazement, whom should she meet but Alan Steyne, striding briskly along, looking a little thinner in the face, and perhaps not quite so exuberantly fit, but still splendidly young and alert and full of life. They stopped simultaneously, a few paces from each other.

"You have been ill," Judy said.

She was smitten almost into stupidity by the suddenness of the meeting. All that was most dear to her in the world was before her eyes. Somehow she had never expected to see Alan again.

"Nothing to speak of," he replied. "A bout of influenza, short and sharp. The doctor sent me down here to recuperate. The air is gorgeous!"

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He looked at her with the hunger that he could not keep out of his eyes.

"Yes, lovely," Judy said.

"I—I ought to congratulate you," Steyne went on. "You are wonderful!"

"How do you know?"

"I was there on the first night."

"What did you think of it?"

Judy's voice was a mere thread.

"I adored it, Judy, and—I hated it!"

She laughed at his vehemence, though her heart stood still. Steyne came a step or two nearer.

"Judy, you know that Clarissa and I—"

He broke off. Judy nodded.

"Judy," he went on, "it may seem low and caddish, but I can't help it—"

She backed away from him.

"You're not going to say anything—please!"

"Judy, I must. Clarissa doesn't want to marry me."

"That isn't true. Clarissa loves you just as much as ever. She couldn't change. She's not that kind."

"Then what does it mean?"

"She's found out"

"What?"

"About—about you and me."

"How? It's impossible!"

"I don't know how, but she has. I've seen it. I know her inside out. She's found out, and so she's told you that she won't marry you; but she's utterly miserable—she's breaking her heart. You must make her think it isn't true. You must marry her."

"Judy, you're quite mad!"

"No, I'm not. You must know that what I say is true."

"I know nothing except what she told me."

"She told you a lie—only for your sake, because she thought it would make you happy. She knew you'd have to stick to her if you thought she loved you; so she told you she didn't."

Thus Judy, in her uncompromising way, showed the denser male mind what her feminine intuition had divined from her friend's conduct. Alan still struggled against the truth.

"I think you're wrong. Clarissa is the soul of truth. She couldn't carry out such a deception."

"She deceived you," said Judy accusingly; "but she didn't deceive me."

"Do you mean you won't admit that she

knows her own mind? You won't marry me, Judy?"

Judy stamped her foot on the springy turf.

"I won't have Chummy's heart broken," she said. "I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on the earth!"

Steyne gazed at Judy with incredulity in his eyes. Any one who was much with him of late must have noticed how seldom his eyes were filled with laughter now.

"You cannot mean it," he said.

"I do mean it," she answered.

His direct masculine intelligence would not take it in. To him the fact that Clarissa did not wish to marry him was sufficient. It seemed nothing short of madness to probe into her motives. And—this was a more cogent argument still—if Clarissa really did know that he and Judy loved each other, then she must realize that he and she could never be happy together if they were to marry.

Judy assented to Steyne's suggestion that they should walk a little way together. Then they returned to the town, and he asked her to have tea with him.

They sat in a corner of the lounge of his hotel, which was a very quiet one. He asked Judy to tell him about her new life. He showed evident satisfaction when she told him that, outside of her work, she was living just as she had lived before. She told him about her new contract. She was to leave London in February for Paris. All summer she would be in Scandinavia, where the public was very fond of her kind of dancing. At least, Mr. Tannary had told her so.

"Judy," said Alan, as she was putting on her gloves, "if at the end of a year Clarissa is still of the same mind, will you change yours?"

She shook her head, meeting his desperate eyes with every appearance of calm determination.

"No, no—nothing will make me change. I know Chummy. I dare say she will be what you call of the same mind next year and in ten years' time."

"Then what could I do, anyhow?"

"You can persuade her that she's wrong, and that you do care for her."

Steyne groaned.

"You are utterly impossible, Judy! How can I do that? I can't believe you mean to be so cruel. I won't believe it!"

"You must," she said. "I'm not cruel."

It's you. We've said good-by once and for all, and you shouldn't try to make me unhappy."

"Judy, I want to make you happy!" he cried passionately.

"You can make me happy by marrying Chummy and making her happy."

A flush of anger mounted to the young man's forehead.

"You say that over and over again, like a parrot!"

Her temper rose, too.

"I say it because I mean it, and you don't seem to be able to understand it."

She got up. Steyne followed her, and at the hotel door she held out her hand.

"Good-by."

He did not offer to accompany her to the station. He was still weak from his illness. Her presence was a torture greater than he could bear.

"I shall go out to the East with Hylton," he said sullenly, like a sulky boy.

"He asked me to go with him. I'm not going to stay in this country. At least I shall get some sport."

Judy was too wise to raise any objection or to offer further advice.

"I hope you'll have a good time," she said, with the straight, friendly kind of glance that she gave Dumont. It was a marvelous piece of acting. "But I dare say you'll want to come back before long."

"I'll come back when you call me," he said.

She was a little frightened by his eyes. They showed his whole manhood in revolt. She suddenly felt very small and helpless. The consciousness rose in her that she could not resist him, if he chose to assert his will.

She had no more time. She hailed a passing cab and took her seat in it. The last thing she saw was Alan's face, showing his recent illness in every line, with his gloomy eyes regarding her reproachfully.

"I must make him believe it," she said to herself. "I've got to do that for Chummy's sake!"

#### XXXIV

THE month passed in a whirl for Judy. She suddenly changed all her habits. She bought clothes. She developed a taste for late hours and gayety. She was always with Bruce Gideon. She allowed him to arrange all sorts of entertainments for her. She became well known in the fashionable

haunts of pleasure, but she never went to the Café Turc.

It came to the last night of her appearance at the Monopole Theater. It was a veritable triumph. Judy stood ankle deep in flowers of every hue, bowing and kissing her hands, the tears streaming down her face while her lips laughed in the delirium of such a moment. Afterward there was a great supper party in Gideon's flat, but none of Judy's old friends were asked to it.

Bastien Dumont and Chummy had been sitting in the gallery. They walked slowly together to the café.

"She was more wonderful than ever," the girl said. "I can hardly believe that it's Judy."

"It isn't Judy," the young man said violently. "She's quite changed. She's gone from us. We never see her now. Do you?"

"No," Clarissa answered, a little anxiously; "but then she is so busy."

"She's always with—that man!"

Chummy recognized the tone of voice—Alan's tone of voice, too—the tone of the jealous male.

"I'm sure she hasn't forgotten us," she said gently. "She must meet new people, you see. We have got to get used to the idea, Bastien. Our little Judy is great and famous, and will be very rich."

"She is like the rest of them," he sneered. "She has no heart, no soul, no conscience. Money buys every woman in the end!"

"Oh, Bastien! Not Judy!"

"Money has bought her. How did she get on? How did she get her show? It must have been somebody's money."

"But, Bastien, we know all about it. This Mr. Wyon took her up as a business proposition; and hasn't he been well repaid?"

"I wonder!" exclaimed Dumont darkly. "Anyhow, Chummy, Judy is like the rest. She has forgotten her old friends."

In the second week in January, Dumont met Judy in the street. She even looked different, he thought savagely. She was still made up, but there was more art in it. She was ever so smart, a clever dressmaker having managed to subdue her desire for brilliant color.

A look from her candid eyes reduced him from anger to despair. He was her slave as ever. She was still Judy, after all.

"Judy, there is a dance at the Lemon

Grove on Friday," he said eagerly. "It's a regular artists' night. Will you come?"

She seemed to hesitate for a moment; then her face broke into the old radiant smile of sheer childlike happiness.

"Of course I'd love to, Bastien! How nice of you to ask me! I love dancing with you."

"Will you still care for it now?" he asked, with all his faithful soul in his dark eyes.

"Of course! I've been longing to see you all again—all the boys. I've had such a heap to do, you know. I'm going to Paris early next month. I'm taking a holiday now. Oh, it's so lovely to be able to take a holiday, Bastien! It's the first time in all my life."

"You spend it with your new friends," he said bitterly.

The more he looked at her, the more poignant grew the longing that could never be fulfilled. Judy with something unapproachable about her—with dainty white gloves on her hands, and high-heeled suede shoes on her perfect feet, and real silk stockings, and a little coat of moleskin fur with a big skunk collar! Judy swinging a tortoise-shell-mounted silk hand bag, with plenty of money in it! Dumont espied little diamonds in the monogram on the bag. No doubt it was a present from some rich man—probably from Gideon. Judy took presents from men now. She was not the old Judy, after all.

But there was more than that to torture him. Judy had not gone so far away from him simply because she had smart clothes and an expensive hand bag. In her eyes were new secrets—the secrets of fame and power and conscious witchery; and these secrets other men had whispered to her.

Yes, little Judy Grant was changed. It was not only the man who loved her so hopelessly who saw it. In the old days, with her old friends, she had always given. She had always been pouring out the treasure of her heart; but among her new friends she did not give—she took. The fact was that she had nothing to give them; only she would not allow it, even to herself.

She insisted on believing that she had been having a splendid time.

And there was always her work. That was enough to fill anybody's life, surely. Such work! Such joy in it! Such a wonderful public! All true artists love their public, but Judy loved hers perhaps more

than most, because of the unexpectedness of her success. It was like magic.

She had a new poise, a new effrontery, that had something dignified about it. There was a new nervous strength about her that was in sharp contrast to her childlike charm. She was in some danger of being spoiled, because people raved about her quaint surface vulgarities. She had a great social success wherever she went; but none of these new people saw her at her best, because she never showed them her heart.

What hurt Judy most was that she never saw Chummy now. It was to a large extent Chummy's fault, for she was engrossed in her work. She had refused one or two invitations to have a meal alone with Judy.

It was natural, perhaps, that the two girls should avoid each other. Judy had an idea that if she kept away from Chummy, Alan would gradually be drawn back to her. And Clarissa, on her part, felt ill at ease with her little friend because they could no longer be perfectly frank with one another. It was, indeed, a game of cross purposes—a very sad game at that.

Then, when they did meet by accident, Chummy reported that Alan was thinking of going out to Persia with Frank Hylton.

"I think it will do him good," she said in her quiet way. "He doesn't really seem to care for painting."

"A man's got to have some job in life," Judy replied. "I think Mr. Steyne had better find one. Nowadays a young man can't hang about doing nothing."

Chummy looked at her in astonishment.

"I don't think Alan would ever be idle, Judy," she said. "He's always worked, ever since I knew him. I believe he's thinking of investing some money in an oil concern out there."

"Will he stay out there for good?" Judy asked.

"He may."

"We shall all be scattered," Judy said, and she could not keep the bitter regret out of her voice. "Oh, Chummy, and once we were so happy!"

"We shall be happy again," her friend replied. "Judy, you ought to be happy, with your wonderful life before you."

"I am, in a way," Judy answered; "but I want you to be happy, Chummy. I want you and Alan—"

"Please, Judy!" interrupted the other girl sharply. "I would much rather you didn't talk about that."

And Judy, looking into the golden brown eyes, staring with a kind of dull anger, knew that she was in danger of losing her friend. Hard though she tried, Chummy could not feel the same toward her, now that she knew. She thought, perhaps, that Judy was playing a part. She might even imagine that Judy harped on this point in order to torture them both.

So Judy had to be quiet, convicted almost of impertinence by this friend whom she loved so dearly. She had an added feeling of foolishness because, in her confusion of mind, she had tried to run Alan down by pretending that he was a loafer, and did no honest work. She had not the brain to cope with such a situation.

That was one reason for avoiding Chummy. Judy felt sure that she would "put her foot in it," as she expressed it.

But before they parted that day her feelings overcame her, and she looked at her friend wistfully.

"Chummy, Bastien has asked me to come to the dance at the Lemon Grove on Friday. Will you be there?"

"I hadn't thought of going," the elder girl said.

"Oh, but you love dancing! And I shall be gone soon, and all the boys will be there. It would seem like old times. Do come, won't you, Chummy dear?"

Her pleading face was irresistible. Chummy's beautiful low voice broke, as she answered:

"Of course I'll come, Judy dear."

On the day before the dance Bastien called at Judy's lodgings to ask her to dine with him. He was aflame with the thought that she was going to be there as his guest. No longer did she seem so far away from him. He had made her the companion of his dreams ever since their last meeting. He would not dwell on the changes in her. He told himself that he had imagined them. She was still Judy, and she had always told him that he was her best friend, the one person in all the world on whom she could rely.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when he called. A young girl, the landlady's daughter, opened the door, and told him that Miss Grant was out. He left a note that he had written in view of this eventuality.

He had occasion to go round the corner to a tobacconist's shop, and then to a tai-

lor's, where he was having some clothes repaired. It was about eight minutes later when he passed Judy's house again on his way back to Willborough Avenue. Just then the door opened and Gideon's bulky form came out. He was smiling to himself in a way that made Bastien see red.

Judy had been at home, then, all the time!

He followed the financier, and saw him enter his big car, which was waiting in a side street parallel with Judy's lodgings.

The next morning Bastien received a nice little note in Judy's sprawling hand. She could not dine with him, she said, as she had another engagement, which she could not put off, but she would be waiting for him at her lodgings at nine o'clock.

That day he happened to meet an old acquaintance—Guy Towers, a theatrical critic, who had lately made rather a hit with a first play, a clever social satire. On the strength of it Towers had a little spare cash. Dumont, too, was not so impecunious as of old; so the two of them decided to lunch at Romano's.

At a table in the far corner sat Bruce Gideon with four other men, one of whom was Richard Wyon. Dumont sent many scowls in their direction, but did not say anything. It was his companion who mentioned the financier's name.

"There's Bruce Gideon—do you know him? Enormously rich chap. He's just brought out this wonderful new dancer, Judy Grant. Marvelous little person, I must say—and lucky!"

"Why lucky?" asked Dumont, controlling his voice as best he could.

"Judy Grant was lucky," continued Towers, "because she got Gideon to take her up. That's his man of business, Dicky Wyon—the funny little fellow with a face like an old woman."

"Do you mean the man who owns the Monopole?" asked Dumont carelessly.

"Well, he's supposed to own it, but it's a well-known fact that Gideon has more to do with it. He uses it as a jumping-off place for his pet girls, don't you know? Of course, all of 'em aren't so clever as little Miss Grant."

"What do you mean?" asked Dumont in a very quiet voice. "Wyon brought Miss Grant out. It was purely a business proposition."

Towers winked at him.

"Tell that to the marines, my boy!"



That's the story for the papers, don't you know. Dicky Wyon is simply there to run anybody Gideon chooses. Don't suppose he's got a penny to bless himself with. He was a solicitor's clerk not many years ago. Every living soul in the theatrical world knows that. The little girl has evidently taken the great man's fancy."

He stopped suddenly, quailing before the look in Dumont's eyes. Towers was an inoffensive person, retailing what was to him harmless gossip.

"I say, what's the matter?" he asked.

"Miss Grant is a very old friend of mine," said Dumont.

"Oh! Sorry I spoke! No harm intended, you know." Towers felt rather bound to justify himself. "One only knows what one hears, and everybody says that's the way the wind lies. They're always together."

Dumont gave unmistakable evidence that he did not wish the subject pursued. They ate their meal, discussing all manner of things. Towers noticed that Dumont drank most of the bottle of wine. He was a very abstemious person himself, and did not care; but he also noticed that his companion drank three liqueur brandies to his one, and did not smoke his cigar in the leisurely manner of a man at peace with the world.

### XXXV

GUY TOWERS, the easy-going, good-natured gossip, the frequenter of greenroom and restaurant, little knew what a storm he had aroused in his companion's breast. He had said what others said—that was all. It was common knowledge that Judy Grant was being "run" by Bruce Gideon—that she was Gideon's property, as some rather crudely put it.

When the two men had finished lunch and parted, Towers strolled down the Strand eminently pleased with himself and with the world in general, and quite unconscious of the fact that he had disturbed the course of several lives. Dumont, meanwhile, went into three theatrical clubs one after the other. At each one he drank with several men. At one of them he came across Richard Wyon's business manager, who, as it happened, had also lunched well, and was not averse to further indulgence.

Such things are managed by fate, and man cannot control them.

Dumont talked to Wyon's business man-

ager for half an hour. When he went out into the calm of Adelphi Terrace, lit by a pale winter sun low in the western sky, his head was on fire. The sky seemed plastered with the name of Judy Grant. She seemed to dance in front of him like a red flame. Everything was red.

Judy was a liar! The earth had crumbled beneath his feet.

This was the night of the dance. It was going to be a great dance. Judy was going with him, but she could not dine with him. No doubt she was dining with Gideon. It was an engagement she could not put off. Of course she could not put it off!

Dumont laughed out loud. A policeman at the corner looked at him, observed his unsteady gait, and smiled an indulgent smile.

Dumont walked for about an hour. At the end of it he found himself in Mount Street. He had come there against his will. He knew where Gideon's flat was. He had walked past it many a time with despair in his heart. He did not know what he was doing there now, except that he had come to spy.

He had come to spy on the girl he loved. He no longer trusted her.

He walked up and down, up and down, in the darkness. It was after six o'clock now, and bitterly cold. The street was not very brilliantly lighted, and the shops had put up their shutters.

Then suddenly he grew stiff, as a little form came out of the door of Gideon's building. It was unmistakably Judy, wearing her little gray coat with the black collar, and a little fur cap on her head, with a bunch of violets on one side—violets not so dark a purple as her eyes.

Dumont could not move. He had not really expected her to come out of this house—this shameful house. He was paralyzed. He saw her hail a passing taxicab and jump in.

He walked back to his studio and dressed himself with great care. This was a gala night at the Lemon Grove.

He dined at a restaurant in Soho which his friends did not frequent as much as Giori's. He ate very little, but again he drank a great deal. He had drunk more that day than ever before in his life.

Judy was ready for Bastien punctually at nine o'clock. She wore a frock of bright green tulle, with a broad sash and little

sleeves of silver lace. Her shoes and stockings were silver, and there was a wreath of silver leaves in her red-gold hair. She looked like a fairy. She was still very thin, but she had lost the dragged look of fatigue and of unnatural excitement. The rest was doing her a world of good.

She teased Bastien about being so quiet as they walked to the Lemon Grove. Judy was snug in her fur coat. A rather crude and yet elusive perfume reached the young artist's nostrils as she tripped close by his side. Crossing the road, she linked her arm in his.

"Chummy has promised to come, Bastien. Clara will be there, and all the boys. It will be like the dear old times!"

"The dear old times!" repeated Dumont mechanically.

"Bastien, your voice sounds like a funeral! Aren't you well? Buck up, old boy! You wanted me to come."

"And you wanted to be amused, Judy, I suppose," he said in the same tone of voice. "I suppose you are accustomed to be amused now."

They reached the dancing hall. It was, indeed, a gala night. From the roof the lights hung in lemon-colored Chinese lanterns that cast a glow like moonlight on the dancers. The stiff lemon trees painted on the walls had been touched up and their tubs made scarlet. The woodwork around the doors was scarlet, and all the beams were bright royal blue. In the supper room an even more dazzling color scheme had been devised, as the members said, "to make you forget what you're eating and drinking."

The place was crowded. They saw everybody they knew. Chummy was with Michael Stone, Clara Jenks with Tony Leigh. Clara was very smartly dressed and prosperous at the moment; but her snub face lit up with the old adoration at the sight of Bastien, and Judy made him go and dance with her at once.

It was not until half an hour later that he found Judy again. Without a word he put his arm around her waist as the orchestra struck up, and they danced the whole of a fox-trot through without speaking. Judy and Bastien could make a fox-trot into a thing of beauty.

When it was over, she drew a deep breath.

"You do dance better than any man in the world, Bastien!"

They danced several more dances, always in silence. At last Judy exclaimed:

"I say, Bastien, I'm fond of dancing, but I did want a little chat!"

"So do I," he said. "Come into the other room."

The supper room was long and narrow. Half of it was taken up tables, covered with red and blue checked tablecloths. At the farther end there was a kind of alcove, with a window looking into a disused timber yard. The window was curtained with orange and green. On a long buffet were spread sandwiches, pastries, and sausage rolls of doubtful freshness. Most of the foreign element drank sirups with water, but the club was licensed, and there were always spirits, vermuth, and beer for those who wanted them.

When Judy and Dumont entered, there was already a crowd round the buffet, and all the tables were full. Dumont piloted her to the alcove, in which were placed some basket chairs. There was nobody there at the moment, and the others made noise enough to make private conversation easy.

Judy sank into a chair.

"You might get me some lemonade, Bastien," she said. "I'm parched. Oh, Bastien!"

Her voice had suddenly fallen to a whisper. As he stood over her, she noticed for the first time that there was something the matter with her friend. He was ghastly pale; the dark hair lay on his temples in wet rings. His eyes had a wild stare. He swayed to and fro on his feet, as he stood there; but he had control over his voice.

"Judy, what were you doing at Gideon's flat in Mount Street this afternoon?" he asked.

"I—"

She stopped, and looked at him with a touch of offense.

"Oh, yes, you were there. I saw you come out!"

"Yes, I was there, Bastien; but how queer you are! I was having tea with Mr. Gideon and his sister, Mme. de Toros."

"You lie!" he said under his breath. "There was no other woman there. You were alone with him!"

"I was not. Bastien, are you mad?"

"You are a liar!" he went on, bending over her, with his back to the others. "You said this man Wyon owned the Monopole, and brought you out as a purely

business proposition. That's a lie. He's Gideon's agent—it was Gideon's money. You lied to us all, pretending you knew nothing about it. The Monopole is Gideon's theater. I've been talking to his business manager this afternoon, and he told me all about it. Wyon's only a man of straw."

"Bastien!" Judy's face was white as a sheet. Her eyes stared, full of a dreadful fear. "Bastien, you can't be telling the truth! You're mad! It isn't so. Mr. Wyon—"

But now Bastien was past control. He dragged Judy by the shoulder out into the room. People crowded around them, and other dancers pushed their way in from the ballroom. The rumor had swiftly spread that there was a scene—by no means an unknown incident at the Lemon Grove.

Dumont's voice rang out, ugly and reckless with drink and the madness of jealousy. He gripped Judy by the shoulder all the time.

"You people, see here! This girl we thought we knew so well—she's taken a rich man's fancy! That swine, Bruce Gideon—she's been taken up by him, if you please, and made into a great dancer! And she kidded all of us—her old friends—that it was all business, and that Gideon had nothing to do with it. She's a liar—that's what she is! Judy Grant's a liar! And she's—"

But the rest was never spoken. Tony Leigh and Michael Stone, with horror-stricken faces, burst through the crowd and seized Dumont.

Judy gave a low cry. As Dumont's grip on her relaxed, she slipped unconscious to the floor.

Chummy rushed to her friend's side. Other men cleared a space. Dumont was led away, laughing riotously in his madness, and Judy was carried to the cloakroom.

There was a hubbub for a short time, and among the little crowd of friends there was immense surprise. It was so unlike Bastien! He was such a quiet fellow, and they knew that he adored Judy.

Many of the other people, however, thought it rather a storm in a teacup. They knew it as a matter of common gossip that Bruce Gideon was "running" the little dancer. Dumont had drunk too much, had got excited, and had made a

fool of himself. Well, he would have a head in the morning, and would feel very sorry for himself. Meanwhile, on with the dance!

Judy opened her eyes in the cloakroom. Chummy was bathing her forehead and the attendant was holding smelling salts to her nose. She gave a little moan.

"Take me home!" she said. "My head is splitting. What a terrible noise that band is making!"

Chummy hastened out to tell some one to call a cab. The attendant tried to make Judy drink some brandy.

"No, take it away," she said. "I hate the filthy stuff."

Chummy came back, and with her Michael Stone. There was a side door. They helped Judy out through a yard, and into the taxicab. She smiled at Michael in the old childish way.

"I was a perfect silly, Michael; but it was so very hot!"

She did not speak in the cab.

When they reached the door Chummy hesitated.

"You're tired, Judy dear—"

"Come up with me, please, Chummy!"

Chummy had no choice. They went upstairs into Judy's little sitting room. Judy's first action was a very Judyish one. The room was full of flowers, as usual—a marvelous collection of midwinter roses and carnations and lilies. Judy swept them all out of the vases and bowls, leaving trails of water everywhere. Then she opened the window, with her arms full of them, and flung them down into the street.

"What did Bastien say, Chummy?" she asked, when she had slammed the window down.

"I wasn't there," her friend answered.

"But you must have heard from the others. Chummy, I must know! As far as I can remember, he said that Mr. Gideon was—"

"Judy darling, poor Bastien was drunk."

"He said Mr. Gideon was giving me money," Judy went on inexorably. "He told all the boys and girls that I had taken Mr. Gideon's fancy, and that he had paid for everything and brought me out at the Monopole."

"Judy, Bastien adores you," Chummy insisted. "He is jealous, and he was drunk."

"I know he was drunk," replied Judy; "but that was what he said, wasn't it?—that Mr. Gideon had paid for everything—that the Monopole is his theater—that Mr. Wyon is only Mr. Gideon's man of business. And Bastien said I lied because I pretended that it was Mr. Wyon who had brought me out, and that it was a matter of business. Is that right, Chummy?"

"I wasn't there—yes, I suppose that's what he said; but he wasn't responsible."

"You see, Chummy, you may believe me or not, but I didn't know. It was an awful shock. That's why I fainted. I knew Bastien never meant to hurt me. I knew that he had gone mad; but it was the shock—his shouting that all out before the boys, and making me out to be Heaven knows what! And I didn't know, Chummy—I didn't know! That brute has utterly deceived me, Chummy, and that slimy little devil with the old woman's face! And I thought I knew men!"

Poor Judy dropped on a chair and laughed and cried convulsively. Chummy did her best to comfort her, very much at sea as to what it all meant.

"Of course you didn't know, Judy darling! It doesn't matter—not a pin. Nobody would have believed it."

"Bastien said I was a liar! He told them all! He's found out something—if he isn't quite mad."

"Dearest, he never meant it. He wasn't himself. They all know that. Now you must rest, Judy. Let me put you to bed."

"No, I'll put myself, thanks. Chummy, angel, thanks ever so much, and good night. Don't stay—I'm all right. I must get some rest, because to-morrow I've a great deal to do."

### XXXVI

JUDY was up quite early the next morning. She dressed herself with more care than usual. She looked quite collected, but she was simply boiling inside. She would have brought down the universe about her head without a qualm.

She was going to have no truck with men of straw. She rang up Bruce Gideon's flat, and asked him when he could see her. The answer was that he had an appointment in the city at eleven o'clock. She said that she would be in Mount Street at half past ten.

Gideon was in his study, and she was shown straight in there.

"Is it true, or is it not," she began, "that you own the Monopole Theater, and that you paid all the expenses of bringing me out?"

"What have you been hearing, Miss Judy?" the big man cautiously replied.

"Just that. Is it true?"

"Well, yes, it is. How have you found out?"

"Never mind! So you've fooled me over this business!"

Gideon turned in his chair and faced her with an air of appealing to reason.

"You wouldn't have allowed me to do it—I knew that. When Guarvenius died, the world would have lost a great artist. You had a prejudice against me; so I stepped in in the only way I could."

"Then Mr. Wyon is nothing—nothing at all?"

"He is a very good man of business. I have so much to attend to that I can't be bothered with the theater."

Judy laughed in bitter self-mockery.

"And I took it all in! I thought how wonderful he was—so businesslike! I was idiot enough to imagine that any man would do what he was doing, even for the greatest artist in the world, and want nothing back! And I always said I knew men—knew them inside out!"

Gideon behaved with commendable tact. He was neither frivolous nor self-satisfied nor provocative in any way.

"After all, what do you object to?" he asked persuasively. "You have more than justified the experiment, if you choose to look on it as one. I never thought it was a gamble. I knew it was a dead certainty. You are one of the greatest dancers the world has ever seen."

"I object to being deceived," said Judy savagely. "I object to people saying that you run me, and that I've taken your fancy. I object to anybody thinking I've ever taken anything from you, except a few meals!"

She flung the last words out with a biting contempt that brought a glow into Gideon's pale eyes.

"Who is saying that?" he asked.

"Never you mind! It has been said."

Gideon looked at her inquiringly.

"Since your conscience is quite clear—" he began.

"My conscience is clear enough," she interrupted, and the words dashed from her lips like a mountain waterfall. "But I



shouldn't like to have yours, Mr. Gideon! Lying to a poor girl who has to make her living—making her name a byword! Do you suppose I'd have gone on with the job, once M. Guarvenius was dead, if I'd known it was you behind it? Of course, I was a fool to be taken in. Other people knew it—my friends, all the people I love, and a lot of horrible strangers; but I never knew it myself!"

She struggled with swelling tears that she would rather die than shed.

Gideon allowed a moment to elapse. Then he said, without looking at her:

"All the same, you must admit I have had the honor and the good fortune to give a great dancer to the world."

"That you haven't!"

Judy's voice sounded as if her frail body were about to burst with rage. The rich man smiled with tolerance.

"You cannot pretend that you can't dance. That would be rather too much of a joke!"

"I don't pretend anything," she flashed; "but I'll tell you one thing—I'm never going to dance again. Not likely—after this!"

It was useless for Gideon to argue or plead. Judy was adamant. She would give up her career as a dancer rather than owe anything to him. He had cheated her; he had behaved like a cad. She would cancel her contract with Matthew Tannary and return to her model work. Later on, possibly, when other people had forgotten all this shameful business, she would go on the stage and dance again under another name; but she was not going to star all over Europe as Judy Grant, the dancer whom Bruce Gideon, the financier, had brought out.

She flung herself out of Gideon's flat, and went at once to see Matthew Tannary at his office off the Strand.

He was a little, dark, bullet-headed Scotsman, with an iron-gray mustache. He was a man of few words, and his eyes were very keen, but sometimes they twinkled with fun.

He listened to all that she had to say. Then he kept silent for a few moments, while he regarded her with a certain friendly admiration at which even fiery little Judy could not take offense. What he finally said was very characteristic.

"I wonder why Wyon couldn't have kept his counsel better!"

This made Judy wild with anger.

"That's not the point, Mr. Tannary!" she cried. "I've been shamefully deceived, and I won't stand it! Nothing would have induced me to appear at the Monopole if I'd known that Mr. Gideon was paying for everything. Nothing would have induced me to sign this contract with you."

"Why is that, Miss Grant?"

"Don't you see?" she asked impatiently. "I owe all my success to him, and I just won't have it!"

"Ye can't throw your success away," he said dryly.

"I can stop dancing."

"Then ye mean to break your contract with me?"

"Yes—of course I do."

"Ye can't do that, Miss Grant. The law will bind ye; and I've spent a good deal on advertising ye and all that kind of thing."

"I'll pay you back. I've got plenty of money."

"How d'ye know it 'll be enough?"

"It must be enough. You can't have spent such an awful lot."

"Ye'll lose me a ton of money. Ye were going to set the place on fire. The Swedish people will be at me like blazes. Ye can't do it, Miss Grant!"

"I'm going to."

He regarded her with a grim little smile.

"Why wouldn't ye be keeping to your contract and going on dancing and making more money, and then paying Mr. Gideon back all he spent on ye, Miss Grant?"

Judy stared at him. The idea had not occurred to her. There was something in it, too.

"How soon could I do it?" she asked.

"I couldn't quite say, but I can easily find out. I should think it might take ye about six months—living very carefully yourself in the meanwhile. He spent a ton of money, there's no doubting that."

Judy sprang to her feet.

"I'll do it," she said. "Thanks, Mr. Tannary, for the idea. I hadn't thought of it. I'll do it! I'll make all the money I can, and when I pay Mr. Gideon back I'll advertise in all the papers that I've done it—that the girl he cheated and lied to doesn't owe him a farthing, and that she paid it back all on her own, by her own work. Nobody can think any the less of me for that. All the world shall know how he cheated me!"

Tannary gave her another grim little smile.

"Miss Grant, ye'd be making a bad enemy."

"I dare say," she answered; "but I've never cheated anybody in my life. He deserves it. I said nobody could think the less of me; but, you see, I shall always think less of myself. I've been deceived—very badly deceived, Mr. Tannary; and Mr. Gideon is going to pay for that!"

In her face was the violent purity which, with her loyalty, was the very basis of her nature. The hard-headed little Scotsman apprehended it with his Celtic genius, and paid homage to it.

"I'm thinking, Miss Grant," he said, "that ye'll go very far in this world, but that ye'll be deserving every bit of your success!"

### XXXVII

ABOUT a week later Judy heard that Alan Steyne had gone to Persia with his friend Hylton, who had managed his departure sooner than he had thought possible. She herself was leaving for Paris in the following week. She was booked for a three weeks' season there, and was then going down to Nice and Monte Carlo, and from there to Milan, Rome, and Naples. She felt dizzy when she thought of it, but she knew that it was her life, and that she could never have given it up.

Three days before her departure she met Bruce Gideon. She was walking along Piccadilly toward her lodgings, and her arms were full of parcels.

He stood still, hat in hand, bowing with formal deference.

Through Judy's mind there flashed the idea that it would be a great satisfaction to cut him dead; but almost instantly another thought came to her, just as definite. In some way she had so to order her life that Alan Steyne must know that she could never have any part in his. How to do this better than by resuming her friendship with Mr. Punch? It would get to Alan's ears, however far off he was—she was sure of that. He would despise her. He would think that what had been said about her was true. Well, all the better! That was what she wanted.

Then, on the top of this thought, came still another. The purpose that had been lying dormant stirred again—that curious plan born out of the vision of a beautiful

girl and a dissipated-looking man in a big motor car; or born, more strictly speaking, in Vincent Stornaway's studio, as she sat on the bearskin behind a screen. Those hateful words sounded again in her ears:

"Not the sort of girl one could marry. If one did marry, it wouldn't be a little Judy Grant!"

So, instead of cutting Bruce Gideon dead, she smiled at him.

"I hear you are going to Paris after all, Miss Judy," he said.

"Who told you?" she asked.

"Tannary. I telephoned him. I could not bear the thought of your throwing away your wonderful career."

"Yes, I changed my mind," Judy said.

"I am more than glad," he answered very politely, as if he had not had anything whatever to do with it.

"You may walk with me to my diggings," she said. She handed him two or three parcels, which he dangled on his fingers with a consciously ridiculous air. "I'll tell you all about it. I'm going to pay you back."

"I have been paid back," he replied. "Wyon and I went through everything yesterday."

"Oh, no—there's a lot more to come!"

"As you like," he said indifferently. "Anything as long as you don't punish the world at large for what I did."

"Rubbish! The world could do without me well enough; but I decided I was a fool. I was mad when I saw you. Guavenius would have wanted me to go on."

She spoke as if that settled it.

They reached her lodgings.

"When can I see you?" he asked, as she dismissed him at the door.

"I'm very busy."

"Couldn't you give me an hour or so? Won't you lunch with me to-morrow?"

"I might if I had the time. I can't say."

"I'll be at the Mayfair at half past one. Don't disappoint me, Miss Judy."

She hardly answered him, and ran up the stairs. She was struggling with many emotions. To begin with, she was not overpleased with herself. Though the object was laudable, the carrying out of it was repugnant in the extreme. She hated Gideon's flabby face, his ridge of black hair, his huge nose, and his pale, covetous eyes. She had not brains enough to appreciate his remarkable knowledge and

dominant personality. Her most definite feeling about him was repulsion.

In a way she was like him—nothing could propitiate her. Still, she had set out to play this part. She was going to use him, as she instinctively knew he used other people.

Her object could not be attained without publicity. She went to the Café Turc that night, and, sitting like a throned queen among her subjects, she casually announced that she had decided to forgive Mr. Gideon his odious behavior, that she was off to Paris, as had been arranged, and that she was lunching with him to-morrow.

Judy thought her friends looked at her a little curiously. Bastien was not there at the time. She knew, of course, that she was shocking them—Michael and Tony and the others, those dear boys who would have fought for her, and would have resented an insult to her more than one to themselves. She was afraid she was hurting them. Obviously they could not understand.

Dumont came in later, and for the rest of the evening she devoted herself to him. He was really a pathetic figure, so shattered and crushed by his regret for his unpardonable behavior that Judy was obliged to laugh at him.

"It's quite all right," she said, laying both her little hands on his arm. "Really, Bastien, you did me a good turn. You see, I didn't know it. Mr. Gideon had wanted to play what he calls 'hidden providence.'" She reeled the phrase off airily, as if Gideon had truly used it. She thought herself very clever. It sounded quite natural. "I couldn't be so very cross with him, because it was done out of kindness. Of course, I am paying him back everything; so now it's all settled, Bastien, and you mustn't worry any more. Run over to Paris and see me while I'm there. I'll dance the 'Italian Night' specially for you."

Bastien, strangely enough, was not much consoled. When he had walked home with her, he went back to the café.

"What does she mean?" he asked. "What does Judy mean by making it up with the man?"

"And announcing that she's lunching with him to-morrow!" Michael Stone added. "She said it on purpose, too!"

"I suppose she finds him useful," put in a young man who only knew her slightly.

"You don't know Judy!" cried Michael and Tony in chorus.

"I know women," he said cynically, "and money gets all of them all the time!"

Bastien gave him a scowl of hatred and ordered another vermouth.

### XXXVIII

JUDY turned up at the Mayfair Restaurant a quarter of an hour late the next day.

"I met Mr. Stornaway in Regent Street," she explained to Gideon. "He's coming over to Paris to see me dance. I told him I was lunching with you."

She looked a strange little sprite in a skimpy black taffeta frock and a little hat with scarlet birds' wings sticking out all over it.

"I told them all at the café last night that I was lunching with you, too," she went on.

Gideon looked at her with a drawing in of his ill-tempered lips.

"Why were you so free with your information, Miss Judy?" he asked.

She saw that he was none too well pleased. It annoyed her, and she laughed.

"Well, you see, they think it rather funny that I should go on being friends with you, so I thought it better to explain that I'd forgiven you."

"I see! Thanks very much; but I didn't know that you cared about advertising your friendship with me."

"Oh, now that everybody knows, what does it matter?" she asked airily.

Gideon was singularly silent during the early part of the meal. He grumbled at the *hors d'œuvres*, said that the fish was uneatable and that the mushroom salad with the pheasant would probably poison them both, and sent back two bottles of wine before he condescended to be satisfied. Judy could not help laughing inwardly at the subservience of the waiters, the politeness of the *maitre d'hôtel*, and the flattery of the major-domo.

"They ought to kick him out for a peevish old elephant!" she said to herself.

With the ice, of which Gideon was inordinately fond, he somewhat recovered his temper. Judy could not understand his mood. He had never showed ill temper before her. He had always laid himself out to please. When he reproached her rather sharply for not eating her ice, she answered impatiently:

"My good man, I should die if I ate any more! I can't stand a city banquet every few hours. You must remember I've had

years and years when I've hardly eaten anything at all."

Gideon did not pursue the subject. He gave the waiter another order, and then looked across at her.

"I've got some news for you, Miss Judy," he said. "I'm thinking of getting married."

"Are you?" she answered, smiling, feeling deep down in her a weird, angry, and at the same time pleasant sensation of getting something for which she had long been waiting.

"Yes. I dare say you've heard the lady's name. She's one of the most beautiful women in England—Lady Luna Colt."

This was not at all what Judy had expected. She had anticipated the sweets of revenge. It was rather like being plunged into the sea in midwinter.

"Oh!" she repeated, feeling rather foolish. "Lady Luna Colt!"

She was hearing the soft voice again, saying to Stornaway in the studio:

"If one did marry, it wouldn't be a little Judy Grant."

Judy made a great effort. She would rather have died than show Gideon that she was even surprised.

"Can't say I've ever heard the name," she said.

"Haven't you?" he asked. "She's very well known in society."

She raged inwardly. That casual tone of voice meant that Gideon found it natural enough for her never to have heard of a woman in Lady Luna Colt's position. Judy's fury was such that it literally shook her. When she put down her spoon it clattered on her plate.

He spoke of his marriage as of something that could not possibly have anything to do with her. Judy Grant and Lady Luna Colt—two women wide apart, two separate lives, two separate worlds. Judy was in the lower one, but he could move in both. At any time he was ready to make love to her, if she would let him; but he would marry Lady Luna Colt!

She smiled at him.

"What makes you think of getting married, Mr. Punch?"

"Oh, a man must marry some time," he answered carelessly.

"Are you frightfully gone on her, then?"

He did not answer this in words, but

with a look for which she could have murdered him.

"What on earth can she be marrying you for?" Judy went on, with her usual outspokenness. "You say she's handsome and all that; but I suppose she hasn't any money?"

"Thanks for the compliment," he grinned.

All the time she talked Judy was thinking hard, and burning and hating with all her violent little soul. She understood Gideon's ill temper now. As he was going to be married, he disliked publicity in relation to herself. It did not please him that she had spread abroad the fact that she was lunching with him, and that she had forgiven him for the trick he had played on her. He did not care for her to advertise her friendship with him any more. He wanted it to continue—oh, yes; but he did not want it talked about. He was going to marry Lady Luna Colt!

The more bitter she grew inside, the more sugar-sweet was her exterior. She asked him all sorts of questions about Lady Luna, her family, her tastes, her appearance. He answered them all in the matter-of-fact way that so infuriated her, because it showed so plainly that the subject was entirely outside her ken.

Judy knew, with her sharp little needle-like intelligence, that if Lady Luna had already been his wife he would have discussed her in just the same way. She knew that many men discuss their wives with other women; but she could not imagine Alan Steyne doing it.

All the time her plan was maturing, was growing more and more complete. A kind of madness entered into her. She would have her revenge—revenge upon revenge! It would serve two purposes—the complete alienation of Alan Steyne, which was necessary for Chummy's happiness, and the complete undoing of Bruce Gideon, which was necessary for her pride.

By the time they left the table Gideon's eyes could not tear themselves from her face. He was enslaved. There was in his gaze that insatiable hunger which for once Judy welcomed, although it was far from pretty to see.

"I shall be in Paris next week," he said thickly, as he walked out of the restaurant very close behind her.

"Shall you? That 'll be nice. You can take me about a bit. I'm not going to



spend a penny, you see, because I've got to pay you back!"

She laughed merrily, like a child, though she felt like one of the Furies.

As Gideon and Judy crossed the foyer, he touched her arm.

"D'you see that young lady—right at the end, talking to two men? That's Lady Luna. I didn't know she was going to be here to-day."

"Oh, dear, run away and hide!" mocked Judy.

"Don't be a fool!" he said roughly.

This showed her that he was nervous.

She scrutinized the young woman as they approached her. Lady Luna was tall and generously made, gowned in close-fitting black, and wearing magnificent furs. She was appropriately named, for her face reminded Judy of a moon. It was round and white and heavy, but undeniably beautiful, with a classical correctness of feature and the pure coloring of cool, unhurried blood. She was an aristocrat from tip to toe, with a scornful, bored expression—quite an unreadable enigma to little Judy Grant, but a personality that at once aroused the devil in her.

"She looks as if she'll spend your money, all right!" she said to her companion in a sufficiently loud aside.

"Be quiet—behave yourself!" he whispered sharply.

They came up to Lady Luna, who turned toward them, a faint, slow smile spreading over her face as she became aware of her fiancé. She was a head and shoulders taller than Judy, and she saw her, or affected to see her, no more than if she were a fly.

Judy felt Gideon edge away from her. This maddened her. She suddenly linked her arm in his, looked up into Lady Luna's face, and laughed.

Gideon almost pushed her in front of him up the steps into the vestibule.

"You little devil!" he said beneath his breath. "You vulgar little cat!"

"Well, if you're ashamed of me, you don't need to be seen about with me!" she retorted. "Can't I breathe the same air as your young woman?"

"I hate you!" he said with violence. "You've made me look a precious fool!"

"I suppose you're entitled to have a lady friend," she suggested, with mischievous amusement. "Or is the beauteous young princess a jealous sort? My, but she's tall! Made me feel like an insect."

While she spoke, she looked at him, and she was fiendishly delighted to see that he was secretly pleased at the incident. She could read his face better than she could read a book.

He actually thought she was jealous because he was going to be married. All to the good! He did not hate her at all. She had unerring instinct to guide her where Gideon was concerned. Men like him only hated a woman whom they could hurt, and he could never hurt Judy. It was she who was going to hurt him. Her hold over him was strong enough. She could draw him by a thread.

What he wanted of marriage she did not know or care. She had only to look at him to know that he wanted her more than he wanted anything else in the world.

Worse than anything was the parting with Chummy.

Judy saw her friend several times in the last days before she left for Paris. They had meals together, they went to a play together, and Chummy went shopping with Judy.

On the last evening Judy came to supper in Chummy's studio. There were just the two of them. It was a scratch supper, as in the old days.

Judy sat there afterward, smoking and crying by turns. They had not mentioned Alan Steyne. It was frightfully sad. Judy wished the old days back, as she sat there, in her smart little frock, with lovely shoes and silk stockings, and a heavy fur coat ready to put on. Her heart was melted, and she seemed to care only for Chummy, just as she used to.

Chummy was prosperous now. Judy herself was on the edge of a great career. Bastien was doing well. Clara Jenks was on the way to becoming famous. And yet—Chummy in her childish state; Judy herself as an overworked, half-starved artists' model; Bastien as an unrecognized genius; Clara as a snub-nosed chorus girl perpetually out of a "shop"—had they not all been happier then?

She hated leaving Chummy in her loneliness. Alan Steyne was far away, and Chummy was eating her heart out for him. Judy thought of herself at the gate of the world's garden, looking in with hopeless eyes. And now here was Chummy also standing outside, looking in with hopeless eyes.

Chummy was outwardly composed and happy, and full of her work; but Judy knew better.

She tried to think hopeful thoughts. She would be away for a long time. She would try to manage to be always abroad. Alan would come back and find Chummy faithful, and all would be well. But it was little use to forecast a bright future, and that last evening ended on a hopeless note.

Bastien came in about half past eleven. Judy had to go back to her rooms. She was leaving in the morning, and Bastien said he would come to the station.

She clung to Chummy, kissing her almost frantically; but she could find no words. She left her friend's face wet with her tears. Chummy was also deeply moved in her more reserved way.

Bastien walked home with Judy.

"Bastien," she said at her door, "the world is a terrible place!"

"It's a miserably empty place, Judy," he answered, "because you are going away."

She lifted herself on tiptoe and kissed him on each cheek, like a sister.

On the Channel, the next morning, she looked back at a very gray, damp, and sad-looking England. Only just a year since Alan Steyne came back across the same sea, and all their lives were changed. Only one year—only one short year!

### XXXIX

It was June again in London—a peerless, golden June, with blue, translucent days, and crimson and purple sunsets, and long lavender-gray twilights slipping into short fairy nights of sapphire satin and silver moonshine. It was London at its very best.

There came a heat wave for a few days, and then London gasped and sweated, but always the nights were cool.

The doors of the Café Turc were swung wide open to the street. Dan sat on the steps, and played his guitar and sang his songs for the world to hear.

Inside, it was a reek of smoke and coffee and stockpot and wine dregs, as usual; and the usual crowd were there. Bastien Dumont and Michael Stone sat at the table under the dead master's sketch of Clarissa Morley, with its faded laurel wreath and rusty crape bow. Bastien was fulfilling himself. He need no longer go without food or necessity, although he still did so

quite often from habit. He had the indefinable air of the man who is arriving. A man's work improves with recognition and success, as it does by the very fact of working. It is the man who has no work to do who works badly. Bastien's big canvas at the Belvoir Galleries, "Sewermen at Breakfast," was making all London talk.

"Judy is back," said Michael Stone, stirring his iced coffee in the long glass.

"Yes," replied Dumont, in the depths of gloom. "So I hear."

"She is famous."

"She has gone miles beyond us, my boy. She has gone worlds away."

"I understand she is always with that man Gideon."

"So they say."

"She's been at Monte Carlo and Nice, and all over Italy. Now she's back here for a week or two; and then she's going to Sweden and Norway and Denmark."

"Yes, I know."

"Wherever she's been, this chap Gideon's been there. He's her shadow."

"So I've heard."

"They say he's going to marry her."

"How can he?" Dumont's voice burst from his anguished heart. "He's engaged to some society girl."

"No—that's off. Stornaway told me. I met him at the Belvoir yesterday, absolutely green with envy in front of your "Sewermen."

Dumont smiled a sickly smile.

"His engagement broken off! You are sure?"

"So Stornaway says, and he ought to know."

"Judy—marry—him!"

There was all the young artist's tortured soul in the three words.

"I shouldn't think it likely myself," said Michael, and his rugged face grew chivalrously tender. "What a little sport she was! What a spirit she had! Always merry and bright, with great holes in the soles of her shoes on a drenching night! Always fussing around Clarissa Morley like a hen! And now—now she's the greatest dancer the world has ever known. You have to rub your eyes when you read the notices about her in the papers. They'd sound hysterical if one hadn't seen her. They only sound hysterical because one has known her."

"By Jove, Dumont, do you remember her first night? And even more than that,

the night in Steyne's studio when she danced for us and you fiddled for her? That reminds me—I meant to ask you, do you think Steyne and Clarissa have made it up?"

"What makes you ask?" said Dumont.

"Only that they're always together now, since Steyne came back from Persia. How long ago was it? At least a month—and he seems to have drifted back into Bohemia."

"I don't think he has," Dumont replied. "He came back with his friend Hylton, who very nearly died out there. Steyne took care of him and brought him home; but I think he's going back again very soon. Far from drifting back into Bohemia, I think he's becoming a business man. He told me the other day he'd quite given up the idea of painting; but of course he would be with Chummy—they're still great friends."

"I wondered, that's all," said Michael Stone. "You know what women are. They said she'd broken it off because of her work. The point is, would her work always come first?"

"Don't know, I'm sure," retorted Dumont rather curtly. "Chummy is quite an exceptional artist. I don't think you need mention sex. Anyhow, it's her own business."

"Of course, of course," said the other amiably. He had found Dumont's temper rather short of late, but he put it down to overwork. Bastien was apt to overdo everything. "Only it seemed rather a pity. Such a fine couple! I like Steyne; and she—when you think of all those years, somehow it seems a waste."

Dumont nudged him sharply, as Chummy and Steyne came in.

Bastien was thrown into a fever pitch of excitement, the next day, by receiving an invitation to lunch with Judy, who was staying at a hotel near Charing Cross.

"Oh, Bastien! Oh, Bastien!" she cried, when he was shown into one of the public rooms.

She clasped his hands. She could not say any more.

She was the same Judy. These months of intoxicating success had not changed her. The glitter of Paris, the warmth and scents of the Riviera, the glamour of Rome, the insidious sweetness of Naples—nothing had changed her. She was still Judy,

warm-hearted, inconsequent, fiery, loyal little Judy.

She was dressed in rainbow colors, rather oddly; she was made up; she made Bastien choose the lunch. She nibbled her food and barely sipped her wine. She was just a little fierce bundle of violent emotion and exhaustless energy.

And she was so glad to see him! Her Bastien, her dear, dear Bastien, her best friend, her oldest friend, the one person in the world on whom she could always rely! She smiled her flashing smile, and her pansy eyes glowed at him, misty with emotion like wet purple flowers. Her lovely mouth laughed and laughed, and her little hands drummed on the tablecloth in excitement.

Dumont was translated into heaven. He reveled in happiness for more than an hour, and then common sense forced him down to earth again with a bump.

"Judy, everybody is dying to see you," he said. "We must have an evening."

"Yes, of course we must, Bastien." Then her face fell. "Do you know that I have been here for a week, and have called on Chummy three times and she has never been there? I left word each time, but she's never been near me. Oh, Bastien, I do feel it so! Can I have offended Chummy? I've written to her—sent her a lot of cards; only you know I'm pretty bad at writing."

"Her housekeeper's a stupid creature," he said. "Probably she didn't receive your messages."

"You said Chummy was well," Judy went on eagerly; "but you haven't told me anything about her. Do tell me everything! I must get hold of her to-day. I'll put everything else off. I'll simply go and camp on her staircase. Of course, she couldn't have got my messages." Her voice sank, and she looked at him a little fearfully. "Bastien, has she heard from Mr. Steyne?"

"Oh, yes, she sees a great deal of him," Dumont replied.

"He's back, then?"

"Oh, yes, he's back."

"Bastien"—Judy's voice trembled—"have they—do you think—"

"You mean, have they made it up, Judy?" he asked. "Well, there's nothing been said that I know of, but certainly they're always together. I know you always thought it was only a tiff."

"I hoped so," said Judy steadily. "So

he really has come back, and she's seen how silly she was! Oh, I'm so glad—I'm so glad!"

"I tell you, Judy, there's nothing been said about it. They may only be friends."

"Oh, no, Bastien—I'm sure it's all right! I always knew it would be!"

Her voice trembled with unselfish joy for her friend. For a certainty, little Judy Grant rejoiced because Alan Steyne had forgotten her and gone back to Chummy.

Just then a large shadow was thrown across the table, Dumont looked up and saw that Bruce Gideon had come up, soft-footed, and was smiling down at Judy with a proprietary air.

"Ah, here you are, Mr. Punch!" said Judy in her offhand way. "Bastien, this is Mr. Gideon. Do you remember? I brought him to the Lemon Grove one night—dear old Lemon Grove! And you met at my dinner party, too. Mr. Punch, you remember Mr. Dumont, my oldest and dearest and best and most perfect friend?"

In that moment Dumont felt that Judy had changed. She had not changed toward him, but her whole nature had changed. No one else, perhaps, would have known it; but he loved her.

They all three talked for a little while. Gideon had lunched, but he sat down and drank a cup of coffee. He was expansive; his smile was frequent; there was no peevishness about him. Dumont hated his way of looking at Judy as if he owned her. Once he patted her hand. After that she no longer let it lie on the table.

Gideon tried to talk about her recent successes, and evidently thought he had a great share in them; but Judy resolutely kept the conversation to the old London days. She would not talk about her new self, the famous dancer.

To Dumont's intense delight, when they rose from the table, Judy dismissed Gideon.

"I'm going with Bastien to call on my darling Chummy," she told him. "I haven't seen her yet, and I simply can't live any longer. *Au revoir*, Mr. Punch!"

"But you promised to come to my sister's," he objected, growing red all over his pasty face and purple about the ears and jowl. "That's why I came for you."

"I know, but Mme. de Toros won't miss me. She's got a big party, and I simply must see Chummy."

"This evening, then," Gideon said, with an ugly look at the painter.

"All right! Call for me here; and you might ask your sister to supper after the show."

"I will, if she's free," he said ungraciously.

Judy and Dumont went off together. It was strange and unreal to see the waiters and the manager bowing before the great dancer—all those men in their black and white, with their dark heads and pale foreign faces, bowing deferentially before little Judy Grant.

"Let's walk, Bastien," she said. "I do love walking in London. And it's such a lovely day!"

The heat wave was over, and the weather was cool and delicious. Trafalgar Square made a glittering picture, with the fountains throwing up their flashing spray, and the summer-clad crowds, with a great deal of red in the women's hats, and the ragged urchins playing about the great basins of water, fishing for artificial goldfish made out of orange peel.

"Oh, London!" cried Judy from her full heart. "Oh, dear, dear London!"

"I'll paint this, Judy, and give it to you," Bastien said in reply.

He walked as close to her as he dared. Sometimes her shoulder touched his arm, and the touch gave him a thrill of pain like a knife. He loved her so—and she would never, never love him.

Yes, indeed, she did love him—she loved him with a wonderful love; but it was not what he wanted. Still, he must not be ungrateful. Like her, he was humble of heart, and he felt that he could never have been worthy of her.

They found Chummy at work in her studio.

The two girls were clasped in each other's arms.

"Judy—little Judy!" said Chummy's beautiful deep voice. "You're back! Oh, how wonderful!"

"Chummy, I've been back a week, and I've called three times, and each time I've left a message."

"I never got any. Judy dear, how splendid you look! And what a wonderful person you are!"

"And you, Chummy—you're lovelier even than I remembered!"

Judy kissed her friend again. She thought Chummy had changed in some way—in some delightful way. She seemed younger and more light-hearted, as if she



took things more easily. She laughed and joked more. She had evidently been going about a great deal. When Alan's name was introduced, she spoke of him so naturally and with such a radiant smile that Judy was sure it must be all right between them once more.

Chummy's work was prospering greatly, too. She had several commissions. She did not want to take up portrait painting exclusively, but it seemed as if she would be forced to. She couldn't turn away bread and butter.

Decidedly a more worldly and frivolous Chummy! Judy was glad, though she hardly knew why. She had always felt that her friend took things too seriously, and suffered more than she need. After all these wasted years—why, it was simply Chummy's duty to be gay and to get all she could out of life.

Judy chatted away merrily, happy to find that Chummy loved her just as much as ever, and that the explanation of their not meeting before was only that Chummy went out so much more, and that she had a forgetful housekeeper in her building.

Judy was entranced with her friend's studio. She had acquired some beautiful pieces of furniture and some wonderful old blue Persian pottery. One big bowl, filled with yellow irises, was a joy.

At four o'clock Steyne came in. It appeared that Chummy had promised to go to a picture gallery with him. Instead, she made tea, and Judy and Bastien stayed.

Judy greeted Alan cordially. He was just a little more distant than he used to be. The difference was barely perceptible, and might have been put down to his absence in a distant country, and to her increasing fame.

They talked. Judy asked after everybody. She planned a dinner party and an

evening together, with all the boys and Clara Jenks. They would dine at Ginori's and end up at the Café Turc.

Bastien, her faithful attendant, left with her when she went. She shook hands with Alan. Just for a second their eyes met. Hers were smiling bravely, consciously. His were dark with something that looked like ineffable reproach.

Quickly she ran down the stairs, as if from danger. She knew that Alan still loved her; but he was behaving as he ought to. He had returned to Chummy. Evidently he saw that it was his duty. It was all coming out right. All that Judy had to do was to keep it up until Chummy and Alan had finally come together and were married.

Afterward—well, no need to think about that.

"Judy, why are you friends with Gideon again?" asked Bastien, as they walked back to her hotel.

"Oh!" she said airily. "I changed my mind. After all, he did it out of kindness. And I'm paying him back, every penny."

"People say you are going to marry him," he went on.

"Do they?" she asked scoffingly. "People always know such a lot, don't they, Bastien?"

"Oh, Judy!" he said, with his eyes fixed on her face in burning appeal. "I do wish—"

But she held up her little gloved hand and stopped his further speech.

"Dear Bastien," she said, "I love you very much indeed. You are my dearest friend, but I can't let you interfere with my life, or—or with my other friends."

After that he could say no more. He had never seen Judy so serious. There was something implacable about her. She almost frightened him.

*(To be concluded in the June number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

## THE JOURNEY

BELOVED one, although I may not go  
Whither you wend, a long and lonely while,  
My thoughts will still be with you, as you know,  
On every journeying mile.

Your absence, the unutterable lack  
Of you, must be unto my heart like pain;  
And not, my dearest, until you come back  
Will there be joy again.

Clinton Scollard

# Blood of the Eagle

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—HOW A MAN OF MYSTERY CAME TO ROYAL POWER IN A HIDDEN KINGDOM OF THE FAR EAST

By H. Bedford-Jones

THE wet season was over, but the floods were still far from the dry season level. The vast inland water traffic of Indo-China was at its culmination for the year. Steamers were making their final trips. Everything was booming along the waterways, with government launches and private tourist craft darting officiously about. The tourist business was, in fact, running unusually high this year.

When Smith, on his way to the highland country, encountered two outfits, he took one of them—the Wemyss party—for tourists. He never suspected anything amiss—how should he? It was different with the dark man, of course.

Smith overtook the Armenian just above Haipenh. They camped together, and spent much of the night talking. This long, lean, dark man with the burning eyes fascinated Smith strangely. The two men took to each other on sight, as men sometimes will in the jungle country. The Armenian, naturally, did not dream that Smith was other than he appeared.

Ardzrouni was his name. He spoke all languages fluently, had been everywhere in the world, and knew everything. Such, at least, was the impression he conveyed, and Smith was not the person to be easily impressed. Even the jade fish interested Smith but slightly.

The dark man hauled the fish out of his belongings and displayed it. The thing was like a double fish in shape, of very pure white jade, incised with ideographs which Smith could not read. It was Chinese. Ardzrouni surveyed it with huge pride.

"It is a great relic," he said. "Under the T'ang dynasty of China this was an imperial symbol, worn by the emperor himself; also under the Sung and Ming dynasties. The Turks took this royal sign from

the Chinese Mongols and carried it to Egypt, where it became the crest of the seventy-eighth cohort of Janizaries. Sultan Kalouan himself bore it as a crest, likewise. A wonderful thing, a wonderful thing! But not so wonderful as the eagle."

The dark man put away his jade fish and began to puff at a cigarette. Smith was mildly amused by all this.

"Why is the eagle so wonderful, then?" he inquired.

"Because I am of the eagle's blood," said Ardzrouni.

In the Armenian's air there was a singular power. There was no doubt about his learning, his scholarship; and in his giant, bony frame was evidence of tremendous strength. An indescribable air of mystery overhung the man. Smith wondered, as he sat beside the fire and watched the whirling brown river below, and the boatmen squatting at their meal.

"The name of Ardzrouni is not common," he remarked.

The dark features of the Armenian were aglow.

"That is true. You will find it famous, none the less, in the annals of many lands. On the walls of the citadel of Cairo, on the west façade, is sculptured a great eagle. It was cut there by order of Saladin's vizier, whose name was Ardzrouni."

"I beg your pardon," intervened Smith gently. "I happened to be reading about that sculptured eagle not long ago. The vizier's name was Karakouch; he was an Armenian."

The other made a lordly gesture.

"To be sure! Karakouch is the Turkish form of the name, which means 'eagle bearer.' In the time of the ancient Armenian kings, my ancestor bore the royal gold eagle on its staff; hence the name.

Since those days it has spread far. It was an Ardrouni who slew the Emir Toftji in the year 698 of the hegira—a famous deed, of which you may read in the pages of Makruzi. An Ardrouni"—here the speaker waved his hand toward the north—"was with Shems-ed-Din Omar, the Arab who conquered Yunnan for the Mongols. The eagle crest warred through all these lands; it was an Ardrouni who led a Chinese army against Cochin China."

Smith began to be interested.

"I suppose," he said, "that your eagle is the same with the two-headed bird of Austria and Russia?"

Ardrouni showed his flashing white teeth in a laugh.

"Come, my friend! For a horn hunter, you do not badly. No, that two-headed bird was the ancient eagle of the Hittites. The eagle of Ardrouni has but one head. An Ardrouni bore this eagle under the banner of Cortez; another, under Duarte de Meneses, journeyed with it to the tomb of St. Thomas; and I, the last Ardrouni, bear it into the mountains of this land!"

With an impulsive gesture the man opened his shirt and gave Smith a glimpse of a feathered eagle tattooed upon his chest in red and blue. It was a gorgeous thing, in heraldic style, with outspread wings.

Smith smiled at this. He found himself liking the man strangely.

"Great names do not last long in this country," he said, not without a note of subtle warning. "A man who claimed to be the last Paléologue was killed only last year, near Hué."

"My family was ancient before the Paléologues were heard of," said Ardrouni, a proud flash in his eye.

"I should be sorry to hear that you had died of jungle fever," was Smith's response.

"As to that, what matter?" The dark man shrugged. "All men die. If death were the end of life, then we might fear it; but it is only the beginning. The tortoise, that crawls, is the Chinese emblem of longevity. I am an eagle, and I do not choose to crawl!"

"Then fly high!" said Smith whimsically. "People in this part of the world have buried many kings."

The other laughed.

"You are a true American—no respect for royal blood, eh? Well, neither have I, except for my own. I shall not die in a jungle; my fate lies higher. I go to seek

a city of which I have read in a book, and of which men have told me curious things. I think my fortune lies there."

"Mine lies in the hill country," said Smith, and chuckled. "Rhinoceros horn is my fortune. I have a concession from the government, and there is money in the business. The Chinese buy the horn eagerly for medicinal purposes. By the way, what's the name of your city? You're off the track of cities here, I'm afraid."

"It's somewhere along the border—Ngongfu is the name."

"Oh!" said Smith, and his face changed.

Ardrouni shot him a quick look.

"You have heard of the place?"

"I have been there," said Smith, with an air of abstraction.

At this the Armenian started, and stared hard at Smith. Then he flung himself down on his back, lighted a fresh cigarette, and began to puff furiously.

"Good! Good!" he exclaimed energetically. "Tell me about this city."

Smith found himself laughing at the man's impulsive camaraderie.

"A couple of years ago," he explained, "I was in that country after horn, and visited the place. It dates from the Sung dynasty, I think. When the Manchus conquered China, one of the Ming mandarins settled down there as ruler, and later his descendants were confirmed in their power by Kien Lung. When I was there, the mandarin was an old chap named Wang Ling."

He did not consider the whole truth necessary. He did not say that he had opened Ngongfu to a French resident. When Smith went hunting rhino horn south of the Yunnan border, he usually had other errands to carry out. Even in the jungles, a secret government agent can make himself very useful.

"These people," went on Smith, "speak the old language, akin to the present Cantonese, and retain the old customs. My friend Bryce made an extended study of the place for the *École de l'Extrême Orient* at Hanoi, but it has not yet been published. It's a small walled town, and the mandarin had some good rifles. There was also a college of shamans, or wizards, allied to the *fang shi* of the ancient Chinese; but probably the French resident has repressed those gentlemen."

"Good!" exclaimed Ardrouni. "That fits in excellently!"

"With what?" asked Smith, in prompt curiosity.

"With my fate," said the other, and abruptly changed the subject.

They parted in the morning. The more Smith saw of the Armenian, the more he was puzzled. Aside from his learning, aside from his boundless physical virility, the man was reckless and impulsive, carried away by high dreams—yet Smith liked him. Ardzrouni might be foolish, but never sordid.

So the dark man passed on to the northward, waving his hand in farewell and shouting something about the eagle and Ngongfu.

## II

SMITH worked on west into the hill country, leisurely and without hurry. His six boys, headed by Ninh Bang, had served him at intervals for some years. With them, he was equal to anything. Those six constituted an army.

Then came the meeting with Wemyss. Major Arthur Wemyss was a long-jawed Scotsman, dried up and yellowed, with a sinister lift to his eyebrows which was oddly suggestive of *Mephistopheles*. He had a mining concession in the hills, and had been up there off and on for years—somewhere between Burma and Yunnan and Annam, in the Shan states. He was curiously vague in all that he said, and Smith would not have tried to be polite, except for the daughter.

Florence Wemyss had been teaching school in Rangoon, and was now accompanying her father back into the hills. She was a young woman of perhaps six and twenty; quiet, a bit prim, in her manner a hint of fright or timidity. Smith felt rather sorry for her. He did not altogether like Major Wemyss.

Since they were considerably out of their direct way in this part of the country, he took for granted that they were touring a bit. It did not occur to him until long afterward that Wemyss might have been telling him lies about the mining concession and so forth. It was plain enough that the man had been up country for a long time. Smith suspected that he was more than a little tainted with the poppy, and was glad to see the last of him.

These were mere passers-by; but, in the fortnight that followed, the memory of Ardzrouni lingered much with Smith. That

dark man captured the imagination, and Smith wondered if he had ever achieved his purpose. At the best of times, Ngongfu was a hard place to reach. Because of the wizards and the Chinese folk, the brown hill people refused to go near there. Just what Ardzrouni meant to do after getting to the city was a mystery.

It was a good fortnight after his meeting with the Wemyss party when Smith was overtaken by a government launch which had been following him. The launch bore a pompous colonial official, and the official carried a confidential letter from the governor general in person to Smith.

The latter was instructed to abandon his present business and to reach Ngongfu in all haste. The missive continued:

Native reports say that our resident there is dead, but we can learn nothing definite. No couriers can get through. The hill tribes are in commotion; there are rumors of grave troubles in Ngong City itself.

I beg your help in this emergency. I am inclosing your appointment as temporary resident, and beg that you will advise me at once as to the situation. I am confident that your ability and knowledge of the language will avail you well.

You have full authority to act as you deem best. Any requisition that you make for troops or other help will be honored immediately. Orders to this effect have been issued to all stations. I would advise that you should spare no effort to impress these people and render us secure in this corner of the land.

Then, as he was refolding the letter, he observed a scrawled and initialed line hurriedly written as a postscript. He perused this with amazement in his eyes.

I have just learned that a Turk or Armenian named Ardzrouni is smuggling cartridges to the natives and stirring up trouble. Arrest or otherwise dispose of him.

Smith whistled over this. Ardzrouni a smuggler of cartridges? Impossible! The dark man had almost no outfit or baggage.

"Where are the nearest troops?" he asked the official. "And what force have they?"

The other told him. Smith tore a margin from the letter and borrowed a pencil. He wrote a brief note and handed it to the official.

"Give this to the commandant, and tell him to disregard these instructions at his peril. Thank you, *monsieur*, for your trouble and effort. Have you a French flag that you can spare me? Good! You may inform his excellency that I have received



his orders, and am now on my way to Ngongfu."

The official puffed in astonishment. A scant five minutes of talk, after days and weeks of steamy river! No demand for news or gossip or men!

"Impossible, *monsieur*! You must obtain an armed escort!"

Smith, smiling slightly, tapped the automatic pistol at his hip.

"I have it," he said.

"But men! You must have bearers, hunters, native guides, provisions, and a baggage train—"

Smith pointed to his six Tais boys squatted by his boat.

"They are there."

"But, *monsieur*! This is incredible! You cannot go thus alone!"

"I do not go alone." Smith pointed to the sky. "Surely, *monsieur*, you are not an atheist?"

Stupefaction seized upon the official. He could barely respond to the farewell that Smith made him. He watched with bulging and incredulous eyes as the American got into his boat, and the boat vanished in the distance. Then he flung up his hands in despair.

"This man is mad!" he said helplessly.

"However, it seems to me that I had better deliver his orders carefully."

A wise decision!

As for Smith, he felt rather glad over the turn events had taken. He spoke most of the native dialects, and could handle the Chinese used by the Ngong folk. The only thing that worried him was his lack of information as to what had happened in Ngongfu.

To correct this, he summoned his head boy, Ninh Bang. This intelligent hunter listened without comment to Smith's orders.

"We go to Ngong. Set out alone tonight, ahead of us. Discover what has happened in that country. You remember the dark man whom we met three weeks or so ago? See if you can learn anything of him. Rejoin me when you get the opportunity. I shall want to send you on ahead of us to Ngongfu to find that dark man again."

Ninh Bang nodded stolidly. That night he disappeared.

### III

THE mandarin Wang Ling slept with his fathers, and behold, there was a new ruler

in the land of Ngong. Last of his line was Wang Ling, whose ancestors had bequeathed to him the pleasant valleys nestled amid the mountains and the great town of Ngongfu in the midst thereof. He had died one night in his sleep, after a banquet at which the French resident had sat at the mandarin's right hand as his guest of honor. By a strange coincidence, this lonely Frenchman also died in his sleep that same night.

Quietly and painlessly the reins of power slipped into the fingers of Liu Ku, the huge yellow eunuch who ruled the palace. Liu Ku had been abroad in the world—to Hanoi, to Yunnan, to Rangoon—and behind his fat moon face was an uncommonly sharp brain. He made no attempt to place himself upon the vacant throne of the mandarin. Instead, he consulted with the head wizard from the college of shamans—and the result was most astonishing.

Had Marco Polo set foot in the Ngong of the twentieth century, he would have found it not unlike the China he knew in the days of Kublai Khan. The pure-blooded folk were of the native Chinese race who call themselves sons of T'ang; they boasted no cues, wore the Ming bonnet and robes, and retained many ancient customs unknown in the China of to-day. They were, in the main, either merchants, nobles, or soldiers. The mixed bloods formed a lower class, below whom were the brown natives, little better than serfs.

The city was built of brick and wood, and was grouped about a huge brick-walled palace inclosure of some fifty acres. Here dwelt the mandarin and his entourage of nobles and soldiers—a city within a city. None but folk of pure Chinese blood were allowed within these palace walls, watched over by thirty-foot bronze phoenixes as guards against evil spirits. Beside the phoenixes stood rifle-armed soldiers.

That the nobles of Ngong, who could trace their lineage back to the time of the southern Sung emperors, should be ruled by a moon-faced eunuch was entirely out of the question. Liu Ku knew this perfectly. Accordingly, he published an edict which had the effect of confounding and astonishing beyond measure every one in Ngong.

Devoid of lingual ornaments and put into plain words, this edict read:

The *fang shi* have read in the books of air and water that the heaven and earth gods have decreed

a new ruler to Ngong. His name is unknown, for the gods send him. He will arrive within twenty days from the death of Wang Ling.

He is a white man, yet he is of the royal blood of T'ang, and bears the sacred symbol of royalty, the white jade fish. Upon his breast the gods have marked the same symbol which is to be found graven on the stone slab over the Hsimen.

From the hour this edict was written, crowds assembled about the West Gate, where they never ceased gazing upon the curious stone slab above it and speculating upon the will of the gods. These yellow folk were stubborn and quick to anger, yet they were superstitious in the extreme, and did not question the prophecy—particularly as the next three weeks would see it verified or proven false.

Liu Ku summoned his most inveterate enemy, Colonel Chou, a leader among the nobles, and gave him a hundred soldiers, ten of them riflemen and the others archers.

"Guard the southern valleys," he ordered. "Prevent all communication with the lands beyond, and particularly with the Frenchmen."

"And if this new ruler sent by the gods shall arrive?" queried the colonel.

The moon face of Liu Ku was creased in a smile of derision.

"Hei! The wizards are fools, and their visions are inspired by wine!"

Colonel Chou spread these words among his brother nobles, most of whom hated the fat eunuch bitterly, and then went forth on his errand. So the nobles decided to bide their time and see what happened—which was exactly as Liu Ku desired.

Meanwhile the usurper sent fifty of the palace archers out into the hills, to raid the nearest Shan tribe and bring in some girl slaves; and another fifty to meet a trade caravan which was expected from the Yunnan border. The French resident had forbidden trade with China, but he was dead, and could no longer prevent it.

It occurred to nobody—how should it?—that all these events were remarkably well timed, and that their coincidence was really extraordinary.

The raiding party returned from the hills on the eighteenth day, bringing many girls and a large quantity of prime opium. On the same day the Yunnan caravan came in—long files of porters, long files of mules, all deeply laden with merchandise. The bazaars were filled to overflowing. Furs and silks, inks and brushes, pots and porcelains, weapons and sacred images—

everything that could be fetched from ancient China was here.

Once more the old city breathed life and vitality. Sedan chairs swayed through the streets, soldiers swaggered bravely, the wine shops and gambling dens were roaring with trade. Ngongfu, mistress of the hills, was herself again!

An observer would have been prompted to ask a question of economics—whence came the money to pay for this huge supply of goods from China? If the answer had been known beforehand, not one but a hundred Frenchmen would have been quartered in the residency.

Upon the following day the city was crowded with country folk. Every one was at a keen pitch of excitement; for on this day, or never, the prophecy would be fulfilled. If it failed, the eunuch Liu Ku would probably be murdered in the palace, and the strongest of the nobles—who was Colonel Chou—would become the ruler of Ngong.

Two hours past noon, the thronged streets and bazaars suddenly fell into hushed silence. Men stared into the sky, looked at one another, muttered in awed accents. Over the city, stealing up from the valleys below, drifted a dull throb that was less a sound than a vibration.

This was the thrum of the great bronze gong in the nearest watchtower, four miles down the valley. It was answered by the throbbing boom of the gong in the palace tower.

Visitors—strangers from the outside world!

Outside the West Gate of the walled palace city, the buildings and streets were solid with humanity. The crowds overflowed into the open country beyond the town. They waited, for the most part silently, in the good-humored and patient manner of a yellow crowd. The city had emptied itself—every man, woman, and child was here.

When Colonel Chu and his escort were sighted approaching, there welled up a low, murmuring sound that swept into a mighty roar, then was gone again in silence. Slowly, like a wave, the crowd prostrated itself before the man who rode on a mule, beside the gayly uniformed Colonel Chou. A slow breath of wonder and awe went up from every mouth; then silence fell afresh—the silence of veneration and fear.

This was the ruler sent by the gods—no

doubt of it! A white man, naked to the waist, about his loins a billowy sarong of imperial yellow silk; upon his white and hairless breast the gorgeously colored figure of an eagle, identical with the figure sculptured above the Hsimen; and suspended by a thong about his neck the white jade fish that was the symbol of royalty.

A proud man was Ardzrouni as he rode through those prostrate ranks. Regal pride flashed in his eye, and his features were alight with lofty vanity satisfied. Aye, trick though he knew it to be, he was proud this day!

He rode to the West Gate beside Colonel Chou, and there halted. In the gateway was the palanquin of the eunuch Liu Ku, and the eunuch was prostrated in the way; but it was not at Liu Ku that Ardzrouni looked. Instead, he lifted his eyes to the sculptured stone above the Hsimen, and stared at it. Then, with a great laugh, he lifted his hand in salute to the stone.

"Hail, Ardzrouni!" he cried in English, his vibrant tones sweeping out like a challenge. "One of your race comes this way again, and salutes you!"

Then he turned to the figure of Liu Ku, who spoke from the dust, in French.

"Does his majesty permit me to rise?"

"It is permitted," responded Ardzrouni in the same tongue, giving his mustache a lordly twist.

He gathered instantly that many of the officers and nobles understood French, and was on his guard.

Liu Ku rose up, grunting as his great bulk came to a normal position, and looked into the face of Ardzrouni. His own fat moon face showed a sleek and sleepy humor, as if under the surface there lay repressed a sardonic grin. When he met the gaze of Ardzrouni, however, a change came into that face of his—those dark and glittering eyes seemed to bite into him like acid.

"Oh, son of heaven!" he said, giving Ardzrouni the august title of royalty. "Will it please you to enter and take possession of this poor place?"

He repeated the words in Chinese. Ardzrouni assented promptly. From the soldiers went up a sudden pealing shout, which the people repeated. Liu Ku ordered royal garments produced, and these were put upon the dark man there in the gateway.

Thus came Ardzrouni to his kingdom,

like some hero of legend or romance, stepping naked out of the jungle to a throne. And little did any suspect, least of all Ardzrouni himself, what a welter of blood and treachery and intrigue was to overwhelm that throne of his ere a month was past.

For, even then, Wemyss was fast approaching Ngongfu.

#### IV

"You are through with school-teaching for life, my dear," said Major Arthur Wemyss to his daughter, the night before they came to Ngongfu. "We shall spend a week in this city. From there we go north and east to Yunnan, then to the coast—and so home to England; and with us goes fortune."

The girl fastened upon her father those large and humid eyes, like the eyes of a deer, which seemed to express so many unuttered things. She was not beautiful, this girl; not beautiful at all, but one divined in her a singular depth and force.

"And this fortune, father, is connected with that strange Armenian whom we met in Rangoon?"

The yellow-faced man smiled thinly, cynically.

"Exactly, my dear Florence! I agreed to make that man into a king. In return, he agreed to make me wealthy. Could anything be fairer?"

Florence Wemyss considered this question for a moment.

"On the surface—no," she answered; "but if you think that man Ardzrouni is going to be a mere tool, a pawn in your hand, be careful! True greatness is not far from him."

"Bah! He is a vain peacock," said her father. He did not observe how the eyes of the girl flamed at this. "Strange, what fate flung him into my hand! The coincidence of that man turning up was truly remarkable—that man, with his name, and with the great eagle tattooed on his breast. I had been to Ngongfu, and knew about the eagle over the gate of the city."

He turned suddenly to his daughter, almost with humility in his air.

"A confession, my dear! I had agreed to send a man to Ngongfu, bearing that jade fish which I picked up in Yunnan. I was to have a bird tattooed on his breast, and he was to appear there as one sent from heaven to assume the throne. I came

to Rangoon to get you and to prepare this man—and met Ardrouni. Can you imagine a more remarkable thing?"

The eyes of the girl dwelt upon him, not without bitterness.

"Yes," she answered unexpectedly. "I can imagine a far more remarkable thing—that you might come by this fortune of yours honestly."

A slow flush crept into the sallow cheeks of her father.

"Egad! You haven't many illusions about the old dad—eh, what?"

"Do you expect me to have any?" queried the girl.

This disconcerted him singularly.

"I could almost fancy that you admire this fellow Ardrouni."

"At least, he is an honest dreamer."

Wemyss said no more to her that evening, but sulked by himself. He was a bit afraid of this daughter of his, although he loved her and would cheerfully have died for her. As he had said, she cherished no illusions about her father. She knew him for an adventurer, yet she stuck to him. When his marked cards and his selfish schemes ended in failure and disgrace, as they invariably did, she accompanied him on the next wild-goose chase and made no complaint. She took no part in his schemes, however.

In the present instance, Florence Wemyss had some ground for complaint. Their natives had fled at the first meeting with Ngong soldiers; they were alone, guarded like prisoners, their equipment lost or stolen. When they approached the city, whither the booming bronze had brought news of their coming, the least that the girl expected was imprisonment.

She was agreeably astonished when, outside the huddled buildings of the outer city, the staring crowds made passage for an escort which brought a palanquin for her. The officer in charge addressed her father briefly in French, and Wemyss turned to her exultantly.

"By Jove, Flossie, we've won the turn! In with you, girl! To-morrow you'll begin to see some jewels such as a chap reads about in stories. The man has won out. In with you!"

She climbed into the palanquin, and so entered Ngongfu. Somewhat to her disappointment, however, they were not met by Ardrouni, nor did they see him until they were conducted that same night from

their quarters to his presence, in the audience hall of the palace.

Florence Wemyss had last beheld Ardrouni as an almost penniless soldier of fortune, who had even then impressed her with his lofty air and impulsive spirit. Now she beheld him the focal point of Oriental splendor, gorgeously robed and gemmed, surrounded by guards and nobles; and if ever man truly appeared a king, it was Ardrouni at this instant. Nor did he give them the faintest smile of greeting, but spoke in French, regally enough.

"Await my pleasure, until I am able to speak with you in private. Liu Ku! Where is that dog of a eunuch? Ah, come forward! Bring that soldier who asked trial from me."

Liu Ku came from the glittering throng, bent his vast bulk in obeisance, and rose.

"The soldier is here. Let my lord remember that the dog who has shared his bone with a strange dog asks gratitude, not snarls!"

Wemyss stared at this, comprehending instantly that trouble threatened. There it was, plain and open defiance. Ardrouni came to his feet, white with rage.

"Be careful, fat frog—be careful, lest the eagle strike his talons into you! But bring forward that soldier, and let us be finished."

"The man must be mad!" whispered Florence at the ear of her father.

Yet her eyes were wide with admiration as she watched Ardrouni. Wemyss fingered his lips and cursed softly to himself.

A soldier came forward—an officer of the palace guard, resplendent in his panoply of embroidered silk armor and plumed gold helmet. Liu Ku preferred a case against him, first in Chinese, then more briefly in French. Among the surrounding crowd there was a stir, and a whisper of sympathy arose. This officer was one of the nobles, and was related to Colonel Chou.

"The devil!" exclaimed Ardrouni abruptly. "Why, this man has dared no more than to love one of the ladies of the palace!"

"It is sacrilege!" cried Liu Ku. "She is a daughter of Wang Ling!"

Ardrouni made an impatient gesture.

"Let him take her in marriage, and be happy! The man is promoted one grade, and is placed in command of my personal guards. Enough of this! I wish to speak



in private with these strangers—and with you also, Liu Ku."

At this abrupt distribution of justice there was a stir in the hall—a stir of surprise, of delight—and a gasp from other quarters. Luckily for Ardzrouni, none of the shamans were here, for it was the anger of the *fang shi* that had fallen on the luckless soldier.

Liu Ku bit his lip in rage, but dared offer no protest. He had certain adherents of his own, but was not prepared for any open break with the new ruler. Further, he was most anxiously awaiting a chance of speaking with Wemyss.

Florence and her father were conducted to a room off the main hall by the fat eunuch, who spoke rapidly in the ear of Wemyss as they went. He continued his low-voiced talk after they were seated in the huge red lacquer chairs, and during the brief wait that followed. Wemyss, listening intensely, looked anxious and worried.

The girl was far from knowing just what or how much of this intrigue lay to the score of her father; but she had already perceived that Ardzrouni seemed intoxicated by the power into which he had stepped so suddenly. She was soon to comprehend, however, that the Armenian knew pretty well what he was about.

The door opened, and Ardzrouni appeared, still in his gorgeous costume. Behind him were two soldiers, armed with halberds, who stationed themselves at the door. Liu Ku rose with an angry gesture, but the dark man laughed.

"They do not understand French, fat frog! Sit down. Ah, my dear Wemyss, greetings! And my apologies, *mademoiselle*, for so curt a reception out yonder. There was more going on than appeared on the surface, and I dared take no risks. Now that I may kiss your hand, heaven has no greater blessings to promise!"

He brought her fingers to his lips, bowing. Then, abruptly, he turned to Wemyss and extended a small box.

"A present to you—an earnest of our bargain. It is well that you are here, for we are shortly to have trouble."

Wemyss opened the box, caught a glimpse of blazing stones within, and hastily closed it. His face altered. With this gift Ardzrouni had bought him, body and soul.

Ardzrouni glanced at Liu Ku, smiled sardonically, and seated himself.

"The conspirators are all here," he observed. "The arrangements went off to a nicety, Wemyss. Our fat friend conducted everything splendidly. He is now a trifle out of humor, and it is time to reach an understanding. Speak, Liu Ku! You have my permission."

The moon-faced eunuch was trembling with fury, but controlled himself.

"It is indeed time," he said slowly. "M. Wemyss, when I arranged matters with you four months ago, it was agreed that the man whom you were to send me was to remain content with the royal name and dignity, and was not to interfere with my control of Ngong. Is not that so?"

"That is true," assented Wemyss, and glanced at Ardzrouni, who shrugged and lighted a cigarette.

"What has happened?" continued Liu Ku. "This man came, and I put him on the throne of the mandarin. From that moment he has interfered with me, humiliated me, aided my enemies. Already the college of *fang shi* distrusts him. I have waited until you came, and now we shall have an understanding. If this ungrateful dog turns against me, let him look to it!"

Ardzrouni smiled slightly, his eyes resting on the eunuch.

"There is one thing I can't quite understand, Liu Ku," he said thoughtfully. "How did you persuade the college of wizards to issue that prophecy? Surely you did not take the whole crowd into your confidence?"

The eunuch grunted in scorn.

"Am I a fool? No. The head shaman desired certain women of the royal household. I took him, and him alone, into my confidence, and paid him as he desired."

"Oh, very good!" Ardzrouni nodded. "Tell one of those guards to bring Colonel Chou to me, if you please."

Liu Ku stirred slightly.

"Chou? But he speaks French, and—"

"That is why I wish to speak with him. Obey!"

Stifling his fury, the eunuch obeyed, and one of the two soldiers left. Then Ardzrouni turned to Wemyss.

"Very well, now it is my turn to speak. Listen, fat frog! You made me a king, it is true; therefore, I am a king. As to agreements, I made none."

"You told me—" began Wemyss, but Ardzrouni checked him with uplifted hand.

"My dear *monsieur*, what I told you was between ourselves. I made no promise to this fat one. Do you know the sort of frog he is? When I came here, his first endeavor was to provide me with a swarm of yellow wives—to overwhelm me with wine and women. Your pardon, Mlle. Florence, for speaking plainly. Well, he tried; and we need say no more. Then," pursued Ardrouni, with a flash in his eye, "I discovered that all the honest men in Ngong hated him, and all the rascals were his friends. Through me, he attempted to destroy the honest men, just as he attempted to destroy that captain of the guard to-night. I, Ardrouni, refuse to be a tool in the hand of a eunuch! Ah, here is our colonel; now we shall see what we shall see."

Ardrouni turned. Colonel Chou, in all the gorgeous panoply of an imperial soldier, entered the room and prostrated himself. Ardrouni bade him rise, and spoke in French.

"Have you ten men whom you can trust?"

"A hundred, son of heaven!" was the response.

Chou was a tall, slender man, full of pride and dignity. A flash of delight fired the eye of Ardrouni as he met that black, impassive gaze, which could meet his own respectfully, but without fear. Such men were rare among these yellow folk.

"Then go to the college of the *jang shi*," commanded the Armenian. "Seize the chief shaman, remove his head, and place it above the western gate of the palace. Over it put a placard stating that this man abused his office by taking to himself certain ladies of the royal household, after the death of Wang Ling. Go!"

Liu Ku took a step forward. His face was livid.

"If you do this—"

"One word, fat frog, and your head follows that of your friend!" said Ardrouni. So terrible were his eyes that the eunuch blanched and retreated, folding his hands in his sleeves. "You have heard my orders, Colonel Chou?"

The impassive soldier prostrated himself ceremoniously.

"They shall be obeyed, oh, son of heaven!"

There was a moment of tense silence, until the three were once more alone with Florence, who had sat through this scene

with a growing terror in her face. Now, of a sudden, she leaned forward and spoke to Ardrouni. Her voice shook.

"Do you know—do you realize that you are risking everything—"

The dark features of Ardrouni softened marvelously in a smile so warm, so filled with high courtesy, that the girl herself was astounded.

"Dear *mademoiselle*!" he said quietly. "I follow my destiny; but it will never lead me to the grave of a dishonored craven. Do you understand?"

"Oh!" she said, and sat upright again. "Oh! You—you are magnificent!"

Ardrouni only smiled sadly at this, as if for an instant all the bombast of his usual speech was stripped from his mind. Then, with a shrug, he turned to the fat eunuch and spoke crisply.

"You have heard me. Is there to be peace or war between us?"

Liu Ku bowed. He was suddenly very humble.

"Let there be peace, son of heaven! I have made many errors; now that I see you are truly sent by the gods to rule this place, I obey you."

Ardrouni smiled and twirled his mustache with a satisfied air.

"Good!" he said. "Now let us speak about the loot, Wemyss!"

## V

On the following morning Florence Wemyss was strolling through the wondrous garden of the palace, when Ardrouni approached her, followed by a number of nobles. These he waved back, and greeted her in smiling English. The man looked very handsome, wearing robes of pure royal yellow, upon which were brodered five-clawed dragons.

"Good morning!" he exclaimed. "No one here speaks English—it is safe. Come and walk with me; it is a royal command, dear lady!"

"I obey with humility," responded the girl, and laughed.

"Are your quarters satisfactory?" queried the Armenian with courteous solicitude. "Your food, your slaves—are they to your liking?"

"Everything is wonderful, thank you! And how does it feel to be a king?"

Ardrouni gave her a quick glance. The question sobered him instantly.

"Ah, the reality is different from the

dream, I assure you! Where is your father?"

"Playing with the stones you gave him last night." The eyes of the girl darkened. "Why did you give him that present? Were you afraid he would join Liu Ku against you?"

Ardzrouni stopped short. The look that he gave her was almost a look of fright.

"Lady! Such words on your lips—"

"Oh, I know my father!" she said bitterly. "And you did well, my friend. You and I need not mince words. I do not want my father to turn against you."

"Thank you," said Ardzrouni, almost humbly. He was startled and astonished.

"Tell me," she went on frankly, "what do you expect to do here? Loot the place, and then disappear?"

Ardzrouni lighted a cigarette. His face was troubled, disconcerted.

"Dear lady, shall I tell you the truth? That was my intent at first; but now—no! I am going to stay here. These people believe that the gods sent me."

"Liu Ku will tell them the truth."

"He will not dare, for his own sake. Besides"—Ardzrouni smiled thinly—"he has no proof of the story, and will not be believed. No, I intend to stay here and rule. These poor yellow folk need a real king, and I shall supply the want."

"You are confident," said the girl dryly. Then she broke out impulsively: "Oh, I felt like shaking you, last night! Just as soon as that dreadful eunuch pretended to be sorry and humble and meek, you accepted all he said at its face value. You took him back into your confidence and discussed all your plans before him."

Ardzrouni chuckled. Then the chuckle passed into a quick, light laugh which silenced Florence and left her wondering.

"Bah! That fat frog means to kill me as soon as he can do so, and put a real puppet in my place. I know his breed! Do not be anxious, dear lady—I trust him not at all. That is why I have made a friend of his bitterest enemy, Colonel Chou. Shall I tell you just how things stand here?"

He went on to tell her the things he had discovered—how Liu Ku ruled Ngong with a network of evil, like a spider whose web reached into far corners of the place; how the eunuch had a large but secret party of adherents, bound to him by the strings of corruption and greed.

"For the moment I dare not destroy him," went on Ardzrouni soberly. "I am still too insecure—the eagle is not yet perched strongly enough. I need advice and help in matters of ceremony and so forth. Besides, there are the French to think about. Sooner or later they will appear, and we must have a reckoning with them. If I can postpone the issue with Liu Ku until that is over, well and good. Otherwise, they would find Ngong divided, and—"

"Then you will not attempt to defy the French?" asked Florence.

"I am not quite a fool," answered Ardzrouni, and laughed. "Here is the issue in simple terms—this place must be ruled either by evil or by good. I shall rule by good; the eunuch would rule by evil."

"I hope that you may prevail," said Florence, low-voiced; "but I am afraid for you. This—is this so unreal! Your dreams can never come true, my friend. These things never fail to shatter and break on the rocks of reality."

"True; but consider!" Ardzrouni made a gay, reckless gesture. "While it lasts, I am a king, and that is worth the inevitable ending."

The girl regarded him with shining eyes. Before she could speak again, however, other figures appeared coming toward them—her father and Liu Ku. Ardzrouni flung away his cigarette and turned.

"Good morning!" He spoke now in French. "My friends, you come in a good hour. Liu Ku, may I count upon you to do me a service?"

"The son of heaven has but to order; I obey," responded the eunuch, with a bow.

If there was a deep irony beneath this exchange of courtesies, it was well hidden. The huge eunuch seemed very humble; the mandarin appeared very conciliatory. The open enmity which had existed between them on the preceding night was now entirely gone.

"You know the bargain that was made with Major Wemyss," went on Ardzrouni quietly. "I have no doubt that he would like some earnest of its fulfillment. Conduct him and his daughter to the treasury, and settle the bargain as you think best. Whatever you do will be confirmed by me."

As he spoke, he detached from his girdle one of a pair of small white jade fishes, symbol of royal authority and command, and extended it to the eunuch. Liu Ku re-

ceived it reverently, then gave Wemyss a mute glance of inquiry.

"By all means, by all means!" responded Wemyss quickly. "Florence, my dear, will you accept my arm? Mr. Ardzrouni, I appreciate your thoughtfulness, I assure you! By the way, there'll be no trouble about leaving the country, I presume?"

"None," said Ardzrouni. "You shall have an escort to the Yunnan border, or beyond. After that, of course, I cannot answer for your safety."

"But I can!" Wemyss chuckled cannily. "I know those Yunnan officials—very well! Come, my dear! We are at your disposal, Liu Ku."

Florence exchanged a glance with Ardzrouni. Then the latter was left alone, looking after the three. For a moment the eyes of the dark man were stormy, sad, troubled; then he shook himself awake, as it were, put on his manner of gay bravado, and turned to his attendant nobles.

"Bring Colonel Chou here to me," he ordered.

It must be admitted that Ardzrouni put all the established notions of etiquette to flight. He did not know the Chinese court customs, and had no patience with them. On the other hand, he substituted for these things his own regal nobility. He had the "grand manner" to a degree, and his way of doing things had made a deep impression upon the Ngong nobles.

Florence Wemyss, meantime, accompanied her father and the eunuch to a small building in the midst of the gardens. Before this building were guards, who saluted respectfully at sight of the imperial fish which Liu Ku produced. The officer in command unlocked the doors of the treasury, and Liu Ku signaled his companions to enter with him.

"Here," said the eunuch to Wemyss, "you see the treasures of Ngong. As to the gold, which you so much desire, this is the very least; for we have no lack of that did we care for it. These other things, however, are historic, and many of them date from ancient times."

What followed left the eyes of Wemyss flaming with avaricious greed. Florence, who accompanied the two men, looked rather at the works of art than at the gold and stones; yet she knew that the things she saw were no less marvelous than the greatest treasure of Asia, which is in the royal palace at Hué.

The rooms of this treasury displayed a barbaric yet refined blaze of colorings. Here were ancient bronzes by the score, porcelains from the earliest days, glassware and wonders of cloisonné work; rack after rack of paintings and royal letters and decrees, each in its carven or lacquered case; jades innumerable, from yellow or brown relics of Han emperors to the finely carved and inscribed white jades of Manchu days. Here were trees and plants of precious stones, screens of ivory and gold and lacquer, artistic objects beyond number or price.

Not at these things did Wemyss look, however, but at the rows of great bronze jars filled to the brim with dust and nuggets of gold, and at the bars of gold stacked away in corners. If Florence expected that her father would go wild with greed at the sight of this treasure, she was agreeably disappointed. True, he trembled a little, and his eyes flamed with desire; but his voice remained cold and dispassionate.

"Make me up packs of these gold bars, Liu Ku," he said quietly; "as many as fifty mules can carry. Is that quite all right?"

"Whatever you ask," said the eunuch indifferently. "Do you seek nothing from these other rooms? Let the lady choose for herself a gift."

"One thing only would I have from this stuff," said Wemyss. "Come, I will show you. Florence, my dear, pick yourself a gift by all means—whatever you like."

She did not refuse, but returned eagerly to the precious things of art they had passed by so indifferently. Here she picked a tiny tree set in a small jar of lapis and gold. The leaves of the tree were of green jade, and it bore peaches of amber and rose quartz, with innumerable small objects on the coral ground below. Liu Ku nodded and smiled at her choice, and then halted before the object that Wemyss had chosen for himself. This was an opium pipe of dense green jade, heavily adorned with massive carved gold.

"Do not choose that," said the eunuch, his fat face looking slightly alarmed. "I wish you well, my friend; and there is no luck in gold and jade, for this combination is of evil augury."

Wemyss laughed harshly.

"I will risk that," he answered.

Then he spoke to Liu Ku in a low voice. The eunuch assented with a nod.



Florence turned away, heartsick. She knew well why her father had chosen this thing—not alone for its intrinsic value, but for its actual use. She knew, too, what the eunuch so carelessly promised her father. Wemyss had used all his opium and needed more.

From this instant she hated the eunuch.

"Within three days," said Liu Ku, as they left the treasury, "the packs will be made up and all will be ready. Do you wish to depart immediately?"

Wemyss nodded.

"Yes. You expect to have no more trouble with the mandarin?"

The fat moon face of the eunuch was creased in a bland smile.

"None," he said. "None at all."

The indescribable accent with which he pronounced these words caused Florence Wemyss to catch her breath. Suddenly she found Liu Ku regarding her intently. In his eyes she read a menace, a comprehension, which frightened her.

That afternoon the jade tree and the jade pipe were delivered to their quarters. With the latter came a small box of plain wood; and Wemyss smoked opium that night from the gold-adorned pipe of an emperor.

As he smoked, there were tears on the cheek of his daughter.

## VI

Two days passed quietly, during which time Florence Wemyss and Ardzrouni saw much of each other. The yellow folk were puzzled and disconcerted by the vigorous activity of their new ruler. They were accustomed to a son of heaven, who held himself aloof from all things earthly, while Ardzrouni quite reversed this manner of action.

During this time Wemyss remained in a continual poppy-dream, while the eunuch Liu Ku showed himself submissive to everything that Ardzrouni ordained. The dark man, in fact, delighted in making the eunuch feel his authority.

Upon the second evening after her visit to the treasury, Florence Wemyss sat beside Ardzrouni at the head of a long table. Near them Liu Ku and her father talked together in low tones. Down the length of the hall were the chief nobles of Ngong. Guards were ranged along the walls, and below the table a number of dancing girls were disporting.

Ardzrouni's vanity was for once thoroughly satiated. He was indulging in a royal feast. The table glittered with precious objects from the treasury, and he was taking the delight of a child in everything around him.

"I am sorry that you are leaving tomorrow," he said to the girl at his side. "Will not your father remain a little longer?"

She shook her head.

"He is anxious to get that gold to safety."

"Bah! I will undertake to deliver it for him in Yunnan."

Again she shook her head, and tasted of the strange dishes before her. They were at the thirty-fourth course, and the feast was not yet half ended; for it was a regal banquet in approved Celestial fashion. She glanced at Ardzrouni, with a lift of her brows.

"Why have you eaten nothing, my lord king?"

He chuckled.

"I do my eating in private, dear lady. I have learned how the late mandarin passed to his fathers, and I play safe, as the Americans say."

Her eyes clouded.

"Have you no regrets over the way you gained this throne?"

"Regrets? I?" Ardzrouni turned to her, unwontedly grave. "Believe me, lady, I know nothing about it. That devil of a fat frog murdered the French resident and the mandarin—poisoned them both in their sleep. I discovered the truth about that only yesterday."

"I believe you," said the girl, looking into his eyes.

He looked up and touched her hand.

"Ah! There come the wizards—look!"

They stared down the hall. The dancing girls had vanished. A silence had settled upon every one, and all eyes were fastened upon the string of fantastic figures now coming to view.

These *fang shi* were four in number, followed by a dozen attendants. All were masked, and their masks were symbolic but hideous things. All wore armor of the ancient style, and the wizards themselves carried the tasseled spears which betokened their dignity. With undulating step and clashing of gourd rattles, they filed into the hall. The four chiefs took position facing Ardzrouni, near the foot of the long table.

Then, in unison, they began to speak in high falsetto voices; and as they spoke, strange things happened. One of them flung down scraps of paper, and these paper scraps became pools of blood on the floor. Another threw his spear into the air, and the spear became a bird that dashed madly about the high ceiling. Another drew a dagger from his girdle and tossed it to the table; as it fell, it became a snake that crawled across the board and was gone. The fourth jerked the plume from his helmet, and it blazed up in a flame and fell to ashes.

Through all this legerdemain, the shrill falsetto voices and the clash of gourd rattles filled the hall.

Whether it were from the words or the acts, a frightful consternation settled upon all the yellow folk. The wizards began to file from the hall again, when Ardrouni leaped up and roared at Liu Ku, ordering him to translate what had been said. The eunuch obeyed.

"Son of heaven, these men prophesied that within three days this place would be red with blood, and not ten of those who sit in this hall now will be alive."

Ardrouni caught up a bronze wine beaker from the table and hurled it the length of the hall. It fell with a clang against the doors, as they closed upon the wizards. For an instant the man stood there, passion crimsoning his dark face. Then a burst of cries, and a man came running up the hall.

He was a courier, and he fell before the seat of Ardrouni as exhaustion dragged him down. In his hand was a scroll. A soldier took it from him and extended it to Ardrouni.

The latter untied the thong that bound the scroll, and opened it. Below a string of ideographs he found words written in French, and read them with amazed eyes:

Order me brought to Ngong, for your guards have detained me. If you do not know my name, you will remember me as the American who camped with you one night beside the river, and who warned you against the jungle fever. Now I warn you again. Do not let Liu Ku know of my arrival. I have full power to act as French resident.

SMITH.

Ardrouni was an excellent actor. No sooner had he read this than with simulated rage he tore the paper across and across, until the scroll was in fragments. Then he summoned Colonel Chou, and

spoke to him in so low a voice that Liu Ku could not catch the words.

"A white man is held at one of the frontier towers. Bring him to me. Guard him well. He comes to treat on behalf of the French. Go!"

Only Florence Wemyss caught these words. As Ardrouni sank back into his great chair of red lacquer, she leaned forward and spoke.

"A white man?"

"A man named Smith." Ardrouni frowned. "I do not understand him—he claims to represent the French."

"Oh! We met that man—a quiet, slow-spoken man who sought rhinoceros horn." The girl's eyes widened. "Ardrouni, be careful! You are entangled in a net of intrigue."

A sudden laugh brightened the dark face of the man.

"And you wish me well?"

"Yes, yes! But be careful—"

Liu Ku rose and bowed, excusing himself from the feast on the plea of business. The eyes of Ardrouni pierced into him like a flame as he left the hall. One noble after another followed; the feast was broken up in confusion, in frightened panic. Wemyss vanished, hungry for the pipe of jade and gold.

Florence was rising to follow, when Ardrouni leaned forward.

"Meet me in half an hour at the palace gate," he said in English. "Put on a dark coat. We will go adventuring together—if you trust me!"

She looked into his eyes, startled, wondering. Then a smile broke over her face.

"I shall be there," she promised, and departed.

"What a woman!" said Ardrouni to himself. "What a woman!"

Half an hour afterward, Florence Wemyss appeared at the palace entrance. She found Ardrouni awaiting her, clad in a dark fur-trimmed robe such as merchants used. With him were two guards—one of them that same young captain whom he had saved from Liu Ku.

With a quiet word of greeting, Ardrouni proffered his arm, which she accepted. The two guards led the way from the palace, through the streets of the inner city; and so they came to the Hsimen, the West Gate. This was closed for the night, but the captain showed a fish token to the guards, who opened a small postern. They walked

out amid the tangle of buildings that constituted the outer city.

"Where are we going?" asked the girl calmly.

Ardzrouni laughed.

"To receive a message. Oh, you were right when you spoke of intrigue! Besides that, we are getting a breath of free air."

"Then I would advise that your royal highness should install a sewer system in your capital," she returned, shrinking from a garbage-filled hole in the street.

Ardzrouni chuckled again at this.

"Right; but remember that we are in the East. It is singular that when one is a common person, one longs for a throne. Sitting on the throne, one longs to wander the streets incognito. Such is human nature, my lady. We are never satisfied."

"It seems to me," she answered dryly, "that you are soon tired of your throne."

"No! But I desire to experience all the thrills of royalty, since I have a premonition that it is not to endure forever."

In a fashion that seemed aimless, they passed through the crooked streets of the town, unobserved in the thronging crowds. Everywhere blazed lights—lanterns, cressets, flaring candles of soft fat. The shops were open, and were full of buyers. Vendors of fruits and sweets and foods were everywhere, and a shrill roar of voices ascended from the streets. All the temples were open, and the gambling houses were going full blast. The din of music mingled with drunken songs from taverns and wine shops and the street of the singing girls.

Here was none of the oppressive and stately formality of the inner city. Brown and yellow folk intermingled. Soldiers in their glittering brass-studded coats rubbed elbows with slaves and muleteers. There were not a few nobles, also, with fur collars hiding their faces, who went on errands having to do with wine or women. Among these, the four passed unobserved, for their faces were not prominently displayed. The sweetish reek of opium and the scent of hot rice wine mingled on the cold night air.

They drew at last from the crowds and went down a quieter street, where they dared to speak.

"There is our goal." Ardzrouni pointed to the lantern-studded outline of a temple ahead. "Are you afraid? It is dangerous, I warn you! Some of the wizards are there to-night."

"I am enchanted!" Florence Wemyss laughed softly. "Don't be anxious about me. I am armed, and I can take care of myself. How do you know so much about what is going on?"

"Oh, ho!" The dark man chuckled. "I do not speak the language, it is true; but plenty of these people speak French of a sort—and as you said, there is a net of intrigue about me. Some hate the wizards and fear them. Others hate and fear the fat frog, Liu Ku; so they all seem to trust in me, strangely enough! You are going to see a singular thing in this place."

They had reached the temple—a low, broad building with open front. There were shrines inside, and great prayer gongs, but few people. Lanterns burned with a dim light, and a few priests moved about.

Here, at the temple steps, a figure in the garb of a common soldier halted them. For an instant Florence caught a glimpse of its face—and she started. It was the thin, proud face of Colonel Chou, who was speaking rapidly to the young captain. Then the colonel vanished in the darkness, and Ardzrouni was urging her up the steps.

She mounted, with a thrill of mystery and intrigue tingling in her veins.

As the four came into the temple, a priest met them. He made a swift gesture and led them into a side chamber, then through a number of empty rooms. They halted at last in a small, bare apartment where a single lantern burned. The priest turned to them, and Ardzrouni removed the wide bonnet that half concealed his face. At sight of those proud, fierce lineaments the priest bowed low; then his hand went out to the lantern and the room was plunged into darkness.

The girl caught at Ardzrouni's arm, and he pressed her hand reassuringly. There was a slight noise, and before them appeared light. A section of the paper wall had been slid back. Before them appeared a thin, open lattice of carved wood, and beyond this a room that blazed with lights.

Florence Wemyss caught her breath sharply.

Seated about this room were half a dozen men. Their dark robes and scarified heads, and the magnificence of their temple chairs, showed that they must be the chieftains of the Taoist cult which provided Ngong with its religion. Whether any of them were wizards, it was impossible to say.

In the center of this group sat a naked brown man, tied hand and foot, his body gashed with wounds. He regarded the priests around him with defiance; and now he spoke to them in French, as if responding to a question.

"My message is not for dogs like you," he said in scorn. "It is for the ears of your ruler, him who is called the son of heaven!"

"He is seated yonder behind a screen." One of the priests pointed to a screen in one corner of the room. "Speak, for it is by his command—"

"You lie, dog!" snarled the brown captive. "I have looked upon his face, and I know he is no man to hide behind a screen."

At this Ardrouni started.

One of the priests rose and went to a large incense burner of bronze, from which was curling a slow stream of gray sandalwood smoke. He picked this up somewhat gingerly by its long legs, for the body of the thing was well-nigh red-hot with the heat of the incense.

He placed this between the thighs of the brown man, who neither flinched nor moved.

"When you are ready," said one of the priests gravely, "deliver your message!"

From the brown man came a slow, taunting laugh.

"My message is for the ears of the son of heaven alone, you dogs! And if you say he skulks behind a screen, you lie, for my master knows him well."

"By the eagle!" whispered the voice of Ardrouni. "I know that man! He was with Smith, there in the jungle!"

Suddenly Ardrouni leaped to his feet, his fist burst the thin lattice of wood in front of him, and he sprang through the flinders into the room beyond.

"You say truth, brown man!" he cried out. "Ardrouni skulks not behind a screen!"

He dashed the incense pot away from the scorched flesh of the Tais hunter, and came erect. One of the priests leaped to his feet, a knife flamed in the air, and the steel sheared a lock of Ardrouni's hair as it passed; but Ardrouni, laughing, snatched out a pistol and fired once, and that priest died.

"Now," he cried, while still the bursting echoes of the shot vibrated in the room, "do you know your master, wizards?"

They knew him indeed, and they were palsied with fear and impotent rage. Behind the broken lattice Florence Wemyss restrained the two guards, who would have joined him; and they waited to see what would happen.

## VII

IN the room was silence, while Ardrouni cut the bonds of the brown man.

"I know you," he said. "You are Ninh Bang, the head boy of that man Smith."

Ninh Bang nodded, and worked his members, since the bonds and his wounds had stiffened his whole body. Again there was silence. The dead priest sprawled back in his chair; the others watched with impassive faces.

Outside the room there sounded a clash of arms, a cry, another clash. A moment afterward a door opened, and Colonel Chou appeared in his common soldier's garb. Ardrouni made a gesture, and he vanished again; but now certain of the priests glanced one at another, and the fear deepened in their faces.

Ardrouni looked at them, and his eyes darkened stormily.

"Regard these men, Ninh Bang!" he said, touching the brown hunter on the shoulder. "Two of them are honest priests and worthy men, who are masters of this temple; they are my friends. The other three, with him who lies there dead, come from the college of *jang shi* within the inner city. They are allied with the eunuch Liu Ku, meaning to kill me and to seize upon Ngong for themselves. Wizards though they be, however, it is evident that they have not the power to resist bullets!"

At this speech Ninh Bang grinned. Three of the priests turned pale. Two of them smiled slightly, and to these Ardrouni beckoned. They rose and prostrated themselves. He ordered them to get up.

"Lead these three brethren of yours outside," he ordered, "and give them to the guards who are waiting there."

The priests left the room in silence. When the door had closed behind them, Ardrouni tucked away his revolver and turned to the Tais hunter.

"Your message," he said.

Ninh Bang squatted down, thrust a pill of opium into his mouth, and spoke.

"My master said that you were his friend. He is detained by guards, but he



sent me to you with a message. When he comes here, there are two things which you must be prepared to do. First, you must punish those who killed the French resident and the mandarin Wang Ling. Second, you must pay a sum of money for the dead resident and make a treaty with the French."

Ardzrouni sat down in one of the temple chairs, lighted a cigarette, and surveyed the brown man curiously.

"These things shall be done," he said briefly.

"My master wished to let you know in advance of his coming, that you might be prepared to do them," said Ninh Bang.

Ardzrouni chuckled.

"Is your master a hunter of horn, or an agent of the French?"

"He is both," said the hunter solemnly.

"Also, he ordered me to find out what I could here in the town, and inform you of it. Shall I speak?"

"Speak," said Ardzrouni.

"I reached her late last night and listened to many men speaking. I heard that certain men were leaving the town to-day with their arms. To-morrow a caravan of mules and porters goes forth. This caravan, they said, bears gold which you are sending away, having stolen it from the treasury. They mean to fall upon the caravan, kill those who accompany it, and return the gold to Liu Ku. After I had learned these things, I tried to enter the inner town, but was denied, and some one found I was a stranger. Then I was followed and captured. That is all."

Ardzrouni threw a cynical glance at the fragments of the lattice, where Florence Wemyss was listening. He beckoned, and she came into the room with the two guards.

"You heard?" he asked. "It appears that our friend the eunuch has set a very pretty trap for you and your father. I do not think you will leave here to-morrow, after all."

"No," she assented quietly. "Good evening, Ninh Bang! You remember me?" The hunter grinned and nodded.

Ardzrouni sent one of the guards for Colonel Chou. After a moment the latter appeared, and saluted respectfully.

"I gave you orders at the feast," said the dark man, "to fetch that white stranger who is held at one of the watchtowers. What did you do about it?"

"I sent my brother for him, son of heaven, with an escort of fifty men. He will arrive here to-morrow."

"Very well! See that this brown man is cared for, and let him join the stranger when the latter arrives. Those three priests are outside?"

"They are under guard."

"Good! Return to the palace, take a force of men whom you can trust, and seize every wizard who is in the college. Turn over the buildings to the archers as quarters. At dawn, strip those priests and set them at work cleaning the streets of the outer city. Let us see if their magic can avail them or not! If any one interferes, slay him."

A slight smile appeared upon the stern face of Chou. It was evident that he had no love for the *fang shi*.

"Let an edict be posted," continued Ardzrouni in his lordly fashion, "that I have abolished the college of wizards."

He handed Chou a white jade fish as evidence of the royal command, and turned to Florence Wemyss. A smile lightened his face.

"Shall we return, dear lady? Your father may be anxious for your welfare."

She assented with a gesture, and accepted his arm.

Outside, under the stars, they returned as they had come, accompanied only by the two guards. When they approached the gate of the walled palace city, the girl looked up and drew a deep breath.

"It seems like a dream!" she said quietly. "We're not living in the common world of realities."

Ardzrouni laughed happily, and patted her hand, which lay on his arm.

"Delightfully true, dear lady! Shall I confess that I begin to prefer realities to dreams? Well, it is so. Even the eagle's blood finds kingship rather tiring, I assure you."

She gave him a glance of astonishment.

"You say this? But—"

She broke off, hesitant. Ardzrouni lifted his head. In the light of the cresset that blazed above the high gateway, his face appeared almost mournful.

"I know what you would say, lady." His voice was somber. "You have in mind the wild rhetoric, the bombast, with which I bolster up myself. Well, that is all false. In the days when I wore rags, I wove me a golden cloak out of high words and proud

boastings. I found it necessary to think myself a king, in order to forget my hunger and poverty. You understand?"

The girl nodded.

"And now," he went on, "where has this led me? To a throne, it is true—but to a throne in Ngong! It is miserable irony, I assure you. I would give much to be rid of it all, to be a man again among my own folk; but I am in the grip of a fate which must be carried out to the end. My boastings and high words have betrayed me. I must act like an adventurer, I must hold myself as a king, I must carry the thing off with a proud magnificence—or disaster threatens. All the while I am acting a lie. Oh, intolerable! Before I came here, I had not the heart to kill a chicken, and now I must be cruel! Once I hurt a man grievously in a fight, back in Marseilles. I shall never forget the sobs in his throat as they carried him away; but look what I must do here!"

The outburst of words came to an abrupt end, and Ardrouni's head drooped dejectedly.

Florence Wemyss listened to this astounding confession in silence. She slowly comprehended that there was being revealed to her the innermost soul of this man, and the revelation left her wordless.

Something told her that Ardrouni spoke the truth. She had a glimpse past all the rotund sham of him. She pierced all the grandiose cant of his usual manner, and reached in this moment to the man below. She felt the shame and revulsion of spirit which prompted this admission. More, she comprehended suddenly that it was she herself, her presence and influence, which had drawn these words from Ardrouni.

Singularly enough, this brought a glow of happiness into her heart.

"You are disappointed," he said abruptly. "You thought that all this tawdry, romantic cloak of mine was real. Instead, I am the instrument of an inexorable fate which punishes me, and you shrink—"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried suddenly, a break in her voice. "I could never understand it before; there was so much in you that I liked! I could not understand why you should be so deluded with thoughts of royalty and—"

Ardrouni lifted his head and broke into a roar of laughter that drew shouts of alarm from the soldiers who guarded the gates and wall.

"You thought me mad!" he exclaimed, and laughed again. "Good! And now you know that I was only a sorry actor playing a part! Then you do not think so ill of me?"

"I think you are magnificent," she said softly.

To this Ardrouni made no response whatever. With the two guards, they had come to the little postern gate. This was flung open, and torchlight fell upon them. As they passed through, the girl stole a glance at his face, and she saw a glitter of tears upon his cheek.

He said no word as they walked through the streets of the inner city and came to the palace grounds; but when they stood before the entrance of the palace, Ardrouni turned and lifted her hand to his lips. It was a gesture, not of magnificence, but of simplicity.

"You are a woman such as a man might die for gladly," he said in a low voice. "If we ever get out of this place—well, no matter! Tell your father what has happened to-night. Tell him that I shall send a sufficient escort with that gold of his, and guarantee that it arrives safely in Yunnan; but he must remain here in Ngongfu with you until Smith arrives. I cannot risk sending you off through the hills alone. Good night!"

"Good night," she said, and he was gone.

The guards brought her safely to the quarters which she occupied with her father. She found him asleep over his pipe of jade and gold, the little lamp of peanut oil still burning beside him, the room heavy with the sweet reek of opium.

She went to the window, flung open the wooden shutter, and sat there for a long while, until the night was shattered by a tumult of shouts, cries, and shots. These quieted again, very swiftly. Colonel Chou had fulfilled his orders.

Still she sat there in the window, staring out at the starlit gardens of the palace. Presently she dropped her head upon her hands, and her shoulders shook with quiet sobs.

"If we ever get out of this place—" She repeated the words Ardrouni had used to her. "Oh, we must get out, we must get out! Dear God, you must let him get out!"

After a little she shivered, lifted her head, and rose. She turned from the win-

dow and went to wake her father from his poppy stupor.

### VIII

DESPITE the embargo which Liu Ku had raised like a wall between Ngong and the lower country, despite the measures he had taken to guard every road leading to Annam and the French territory, news had leaked out.

Owing to his knowledge of the dialects and the skill of his Tais hunters, Smith had gained a fairly accurate knowledge of what had happened in Ngong, even before he reached the first watchtower guarding the road to Ngongfu. Owing to the marvelous rapidity with which news travels in the jungles and hill country, he had gained much more—he had gained some idea of the intrigues which were going forward in the secluded city.

Smith spoke the language fairly well, but he concealed that fact from his nominal captors, and used only French. Before he had been in custody two hours, he picked up an astonishing amount of information; from which he gleaned that Ardrouni, if still alive, was destined to a very unpleasant death in the near future.

He ordered Ninh Bang, accordingly, to slip away at the first opportunity, reach Ngong and Ardrouni if possible, and deliver a message. Then he instructed the guards that, instead of sending him back into the jungle, they were to take a note to the son of heaven, who was his very good friend. This they did, in some dismay, sending off a courier in the late hours of the night.

The courier ran without pause, save to snatch a few hours of rest; but Ninh Bang far outdistanced him. The courier reached Ngongfu in two days. Ninh Bang arrived in a trifle more than twenty-four hours.

Ten minutes after Ardrouni gave Chou the orders concerning Smith, the huge bronze gongs were humming and throbbing down the valleys toward the lower country. Before midnight, Smith and his five Tais boys were hurriedly sent off up country, under escort. Late the following afternoon they met Colonel Chou's brother and fifty archers.

Smith was recognized by the native officer, who remembered his former visit to Ngongfu, and promptly took the status of French resident. As such, he was welcomed eagerly by the colonel's brother, who

discussed matters with him and showed no reserve.

Thus it will be perceived that Smith knew pretty well what he was about.

As for Ardrouni, meanwhile, the royal Armenian found himself in troubled waters. The Wemyss caravan departed; Major Wemyss and his daughter remained. Ardrouni sent fifty archers to overtake and guard the gold. The naked wizards, in chains, were cleaning the streets of the outer city—much to the disgust of its inhabitants. The merchants wanted to know who would now furnish business auguries, burial auguries, and so forth. The nobles and soldiers were in some dread of magical reprisals. A great silence settled upon the city—a silence that boded trouble.

Ardrouni, alone in his own quarter of the palace, faced the situation with sane eyes. For the first time he regarded himself and his situation as it really was. That talk with Florence Wemyss under the stars had cleared his vision, had stripped away his blinders of false romanticism.

He saw himself tottering. He was the ruler of a little town in the hills, and under him were a few thousand half barbaric folk upon whom he could not depend. His little orgy of despotism had served only to split and sunder these yellow folk into bitter factions, and they were ripe for blood. Colonel Chou and a handful of the palace guard were loyal to him; the others, perhaps two hundred in number, could not be counted upon.

Ardrouni realized perfectly that his frank talk with Florence Wemyss had caused him to lose his grip. Had he been able to lure and to deceive himself with his old bombast, he might yet win out; but having once allowed his inner man to show upon the surface, he was undone.

He sent for Liu Ku. To his angry dismay, he was informed that the eunuch had left the palace shortly after daybreak, and could not be found. This report might or might not be true; Ardrouni made no effort to investigate, but went at once to the quarters of Wemyss. He found father and daughter together, dismissed his guard, accepted an Egyptian cigarette with keen relish, and made a frank confession.

"I can't get any advice from Liu Ku," he concluded, "for that gentleman is either cooking up a scheme to murder me, or has left the city. I can't very well go to Chou for help, since he believes me an actual son

of heaven—which I am not. So, Major Wemyss, I have come to you. I'm not sure that I was right in detaining you here. I have an uneasy premonition that this palace is going to be a very unhealthy place ere long. However, advise me—shall I hunt down Liu Ku and take off his head, or let matters drift?"

Wemyss listened to all this with an air of sardonic astonishment. His sallow features and upturned brows were cynical in the extreme.

"My dear chap," he returned, "my advice to you is to make peace with Liu Ku, let him run the government, and—"

"Devil take such counsel!" burst out Ardrouni. "I am no puppet! And besides, this man Smith is coming on behalf of the French; he will punish Liu Ku."

"If he had a regiment, he might succeed," said Wemyss. "Then you reject my advice that you should surrender to the eunuch?"

"By the eagle, yes!" cried Ardrouni, with a flush.

"Egad, then it's settled!" Wemyss leaned back and surveyed the dark man with a grin. "My dear chap, do you know why you've failed? Because you have upset custom. Had you come in here and been content to remain a mysterious and invisible personage, secluded in your harem—"

"Confound it, I have no harem!" snapped Ardrouni.

"I am speaking hypothetically, of course." Wemyss grinned again. "Had you done all this, well and good; but you have displayed yourself prominently. You have dealt with matters in person, instead of through subordinates. You have, in effect, showed the people that their son of heaven is really a son of earth. They have lost reverence."

Ardrouni plucked at his mustache and nodded gloomily. He could realize this very well indeed. In the thoughtful eyes of Florence Wemyss he found no help.

"Then what shall I do?" he exclaimed petulantly.

"Let us look at it from a military standpoint," said Wemyss cheerfully. "How many men have you here?"

"Colonel Chou has fifty riflemen and archers, trustworthy men, but the rifle cartridges have all vanished."

"Thanks to Liu Ku, undoubtedly. He probably has rifles of his own. Well?"

"Two hundred more men, who can't be trusted."

The Mephistophelean brows of Wemyss shot up.

"No more than that?"

"I sent fifty of the best away this morning, to guard your gold caravan—"

"Get them back!" broke out Florence impulsively. "Let the gold—"

"Not at all," said her father with a hasty gesture. "That gold, my dear, is very important. Egad, that gold means a good deal to me, I assure you!"

The girl drew back sharply in scorn, but Ardrouni shook his head, and she remained silent.

"Let that rest," said Ardrouni. "You are right, Wemyss; that gold must be delivered. Then there are perhaps a hundred men scattered through the lower country as guards. Most of these are good men."

"Send for them at once," said Wemyss energetically. "How soon can they get here?"

"The signal gongs can summon them in half an hour. They'll all be here by tomorrow night."

Ardrouni went to the door and sent one of his guards for Colonel Chou. Ten minutes later that noble appeared, and Ardrouni issued his orders. Chou assented, not without a look of relief, and disappeared again.

"Then," said Ardrouni, settling himself with a fresh cigarette, "am I to sit here and let that devil of a fat frog spring some coup?"

"Exactly," said Wemyss, who appeared very complacent.

"What about you, then?" snapped Ardrouni. "Do you fancy that Liu Ku loves you?"

Wemyss shrugged his shoulders.

"Florence has told me what she saw and heard last night. It is evident, therefore, that the eunuch wants to get rid of me as well as of you. Egad, my dear chap, there's nothing to do but to stick with you and see things through!"

Ardrouni stared, for he had not expected this speech.

"By the eagle, you are a better man than I thought!" he said admiringly. "Have you no fears for yourself or your daughter?"

Wemyss smiled thinly.

"I'm not particularly nervous about my-



self. If that gold reaches Yunnan safely, my fears are ended. As for Florence, why, I have a firm belief in Providence—also in that man Smith. You know, old chap, I've heard a good deal about this fellow Smith. He's an American, you know, but not a bad sort at all, and clever, really. They say he's done some surprising things—most surprising. If he comes as French resident, he'd never allow an Englishwoman to be harmed. It isn't done."

Ardzrouni opened his mouth and regarded Wemyss with an air of stupefaction. The adventurer was quite in earnest. Florence, however, broke into a sudden laugh.

"Father, don't you realize that Smith is alone? He is quite powerless against these yellow people."

"Oh, he can fetch up a regiment or so," said Wemyss confidently.

"And by the time they got here we should be a long while dead!" The girl laughed again. "Never mind, Ardzrouni; we have rifles and pistols, and if a revolt breaks out you may call on us. Are you still determined to hold on to the throne here?"

Ardzrouni made a gesture of distaste.

"Only until I can get rid of it," he said, and smiled.

"Then why not loot the treasury and run away—with us?"

His dark features flushed.

"By the eagle, I have some pride!" he responded. "As to looting, that is all very well. I have a money belt full of jewels; but I refuse to loot and run. That is another thing entirely!"

"Quite right, my lad," agreed Wemyss. "Nothing like a scheme of ethics, I assure you. Egad, if it weren't for ethics, I might be a rich man to-day! However, we've done very well here, if that gold gets through safely. When do you expect Smith?"

"Some time to-day," said Ardzrouni, and took his departure.

He was not particularly comforted by the cheerfully pessimistic and entirely individual view of the situation taken by Wemyss. Indeed, he was more alarmed than ever. Ardzrouni was not a tactician; he was an extremist. He could now perceive nothing ahead save disaster. Accordingly, he got out his automatics and cartridges, put them in order, and with them laid aside the worn khaki suit in which he had reached the outskirts of

Ngongfu. About his waist he buckled the money belt, in which reposed a fat handful of jewels which he had taken occasion to appropriate.

Early in the afternoon he observed a distinct exodus of litters and palanquins from the palace city. Inquiring into this, he heard a number of different reasons. One noble was going to his country house to marry a wife; another was taking a sick child to the hills; a third was joining a party at the royal hunting preserves.

Ardzrouni promptly clapped an embargo on any further withdrawals. The families might go, but the nobles must remain. He smiled grimly as he gave the orders.

Presently he met Florence Wemyss, walking in the palace gardens with her two slave women following. Ardzrouni, in full panoply, and accompanied by a dozen nobles and guards, shocked decorum by lighting a cigarette and offering the girl his arm. When she would have protested, he shrugged.

"Bah! The deluge comes soon enough. Why worry?"

He told her of the exodus, and she listened gravely.

"You did wrong to keep them here," she said. "They know that something is going to take place, and they want to get away. Now they will join your enemies."

Ardzrouni laughed in his old reckless fashion.

"A lot I care! Let the dogs stay and meet what comes! I wish that man Smith would get here. I liked him singularly, and his advice might help."

Florence gave him a swift, whimsical glance.

"Didn't you care for father's advice?"

"I have taken it, but I did not like it. Still no word of Liu Ku; I can't understand why he has vanished like this."

"I'm afraid you will understand soon enough," said the girl, her voice grave.

"Undoubtedly. In the meantime, I am a king! Come to this little summerhouse, and let us indulge our appetites. They make excellent sherbets here, and small cakes that are divine. Colonel Chou is attending to all that I eat, so there is no fear of poison. Besides, a little wine would do us both good."

They entered the summerhouse, slaves were summoned, and Ardzrouni took a gloomy satisfaction in plying his nobles with wine. In the midst of this scene, as

Florence was about to excuse herself, appeared Colonel Chou. He approached Ardrouni, uttered a few low words, and withdrew.

Ardrouni laughed suddenly, and his eyes flashed. He turned and met the girl's inquiring gaze.

"Let us eat, drink, and be merry—for to-night we die!" he said gayly. "Go and tell your father to be ready. I'll send for you both when the time comes. Chou thinks the trouble is going to burst to-night. Join me in my wing of the palace. *Au revoir!*"

The girl smiled and summoned her two women. Ardrouni called for more wine.

## IX

ARDROUNI returned to the palace with none too clear a head. As for his nobles, they were in far worse state, and all the wise maxims of Lao Tse, founder of the Taoist cult, were put to shame and scandal that day. In fact, when Ardrouni left the summerhouse, it was fast becoming the scene of an orgy, and only the guards were able to follow him.

The afternoon was at its close, and darkness would come swiftly. Outside the entrance to the palace, which stood alone amid the gardens, Ardrouni came upon Colonel Chou, who was speaking with a number of other officers. They saluted the son of heaven reverently, and rose at his impatient bidding. Ardrouni questioned Chou as to his anxious face.

"Tumult threatens in the city outside," responded the noble bluntly. "Word just came to me that emissaries of Liu Ku are stirring up the people; and many of the archers in the quarters yonder are drinking wine."

"You have called in all the troops?"

"They are marching now to the city, son of heaven. Their going will leave all the lower valleys undefended and open."

"For that I care not," Ardrouni gave a short laugh. "No word yet from that white man, Smith?"

"None."

"Keep your men in hand, in case of trouble to-night. Guard the gates. If Liu Ku is found, let him be seized and brought to me at once. Send word to all the faithful nobles and officers that they are to join me here. Think you Liu Ku will dare to attack me?"

"It is possible, son of heaven."

Ardrouni laughed again.

"Then let him look to it!" he exclaimed in his grand manner. "Let him look to it! By the eagle, I will punish him! The eagle of Ardrouni has brooked his insolence long enough, and will strike sharp talons into the fat frog!"

With this wine-inspired gem of bombast, Ardrouni swaggered on into the palace.

The officers glanced at one another, awe gathering in their faces. From his fluent and too rapid French, they gathered that he intended to call down his sacred eagle from heaven to blast the eunuch. Ardrouni would have been delighted had he seen the cheerful eagerness with which Colonel Chou went about executing his orders.

An hour later, when he came into the brilliantly lighted audience hall to attend the banquet which was a nightly feature of his reign, he found himself greeted with a new warmth and veneration from all there assembled. The rumor had spread, and had gained much in spreading. When Wemyss and his daughter appeared, they were told something of it by the guards, and Major Wemyss congratulated Ardrouni warmly on his adroitness.

"Oh, the devil!" said Ardrouni in dismay, when at length he understood. "Why, that is all a cursed mistake!"

"Then leave it so," advised Florence swiftly, although she could not repress a smile. "This mistake of yours may yet save the day."

"No," said Ardrouni gloomily. "It will only plunge us in worse ruin. Accursed wine! I will have no more of it!"

So the feast began, with confidence and new assurance rising high among nobles and soldiers, but with Ardrouni's gloom ever increasing. Nor would it have lessened could he have known what even then was passing at the gate of the palace, where Colonel Chou was in charge.

The gates of the inner city wall had been closed, and Chou had distributed all the palace soldiers from point to point in the hope that, thus broken up, they would make no trouble. A messenger from the West Gate, however, brought him ominous news.

"Lord, the *fang shi* who were kept in prison have been released, and are inciting the people. Armed bands from the countryside have entered the town, and many of the nobles are to be seen also."

"Should this not be told to the son of heaven?" asked one anxious officer.

"Why trouble him?" said Chou, and his black eyes snapped. "At the proper time he will call down his mighty bird from heaven to destroy these traitors. Until then leave him alone, and let us do our duty!"

He might have added that they could do nothing except to wait. However, he sent out messengers to meet the various small parties of soldiers converging on the city from the watchtowers and guarded stations in the lower country, with orders that they should hasten to reach the palace at the earliest moment.

Half an hour passed. Then, unexpectedly, Colonel Chou was summoned to the West Gate by word that a party of men sought entrance, one of whom was a white man. He hurried off to the West Gate at once.

Smith had arrived. Colonel Chou greeted him with some ceremony, for he remembered the American very well, indeed, having been a signatory to the previous treaty put through by Smith; then he hurried the foreigner to the palace.

They entered the audience hall just five seconds too late.

Like every one else in that hall, they stood paralyzed by the sight that met their eyes. Ardrouni, at the upper end of the tables, had risen to his feet and was standing with outstretched hand, as if to speak; but no word came from his lips.

Smith, indeed, crossed the threshold in time to see the shaft in the air, and caught a swift glimpse of it as it struck. It was a little, light arrow such as boys use for small games. The thin, feathered shaft flew true to Ardrouni's breast, pierced, and stood there quivering. It appeared as if by magic, and then the hum of the bowstring twanged out—so swiftly, so terribly, had the bolt been sped.

A guard cried fiercely, and smote with his dagger. Another guard—the man who had shot the arrow—fell dead.

No one noticed this, however. Every eye was fastened upon Ardrouni. Even Florence Wemyss, her gaze wide with horror, had not moved.

Across the face of Ardrouni flitted a brief, sad smile. His eyes found Smith, and he motioned. Then, suddenly, he collapsed and fell backward into his lacquered chair.

At this instant a gong began to boom somewhere in the palace. It was followed by a shot, by another shot, then by a ragged volley. Through a side door of the hall broke half a dozen men clad in quilted armor. One of them lifted a rifle and fired.

Pandemonium broke forth, and mad panic of confusion and terror. Men leaped to their feet, spurning the tables; shouts and screams filled the hall; the guards were helpless amid the crowd. This whole thing came like a bolt of lightning. Upon every one there seized a frenzy of wild fear.

Through the tumult pierced the band of assassins, their bullets smiting into the maddened throng as they made their way toward the fallen Ardrouni and the girl who bent above him.

In this moment only one man acted. Smith, who stood near the doorway, lifted his automatic. The deep, bursting report of his weapon was followed by a scream. Again and again he shot, deliberately and steadily. To his fifth shot, the fifth of the assassins fell. The sixth was cut down by a guard. Not until then did Smith start for Ardrouni's place.

Bewildered by this firing, yet gradually coming to their senses, the eddying crowd began to fight around the doorways. The center of the hall was clear, except of the dead, and Smith ran forward without check, reloading his hot pistol as he ran.

Major Wemyss had been helping Florence to raise up the senseless Ardrouni. Now he turned and gaped blankly at sight of Smith. The latter nodded recognition.

"Is he dead? Speak up, Wemyss! I'm no ghost."

"Eh? No, he's not dead—unless the arrow was poisoned. I say, Smith, turned up in time for the shindy, did you?"

Smith uttered a curt laugh.

"Get his arm around your neck—take him between us," he said calmly. "Has he made any preparations for defense?"

"In his own part of the palace, I believe," replied Wemyss.

Smith touched Florence on the arm, and she looked up. A quick glance showed Smith that Ardrouni was not dead, and seemed nowhere near death. Wemyss helping, they raised the unconscious figure.

Across the hall came running toward them Colonel Chou, with the skirts of his studded armor coat flapping like the wings of some ungainly beetle, and with a pistol in his hand.

"The gates have been seized!" he shouted hoarsely. "My men in the gardens are attacked. Is the son of heaven dead?"

"Neither dead nor badly hurt," answered Smith, straining under the weight of Ardzrouni. "Tell one of these guards to lead us to his quarters. Draw your men in upon the palace, and save every shot. We will join you presently."

The guards were already gathering around. Officers were rallying the frightened nobles, shaming them into taking arms. Most of them, in fact, were ready enough to take a share in the defense, for nearly all were of Chou's party.

They bore Ardzrouni to his own place—a small group of buildings off the main structure of the palace. This was built as a separate unit, in the Chinese style, with a wall around the compound, and could easily be defended. Archers were already stationed outside, and Smith sighed in relief when they got Ardzrouni safely into one of the buildings and laid him upon a mat.

Picking two of the guards who had conducted them, Smith ordered the soldiers to remain and help Florence. He turned to her with a word of apology.

"We shall have to ask you to take care of him, Miss Wemyss. I'm afraid your father and I are needed outside. I fancy you'll find the arrow has glanced on a rib. The shock and the loss of blood put him out—that's all. Can you manage it?"

"Quite, thank you," she responded. "You showed up just at the wrong moment, eh?"

"That remains to be seen," said Smith, and chuckled slightly.

He signed to Wemyss, ordered the guards outside, and followed them, to find his six Tais hunters awaiting him there. Ninh Bang saluted, and Smith flung him a hasty greeting.

"Keep your boys with me. Now, Wemyss, will you take charge of the defense here? I'll find Chou—he's somewhere out around the gardens. I'll send you all the men I can pick up."

"Very well," said Wemyss. "I say, old chap, could you send one of these fellows after our guns? They're in our rooms in the palace."

Smith nodded and strode away. He sent two archers to fetch Wemyss's rifles, and then plunged out into the gardens to locate Colonel Chou.

This was no easy task. About the whole circuit of the walls fighting was in progress. Liu Ku had forced the West Gate, and was sweeping through the inner city and on to the gardens. Rifles and muskets spoke, and above the shouts of men began to rise the ravening roar of flames, as one of the wooden barracks along the wall was fired.

Blessing this flare of light which illumined the entire stretch of gardens, Smith came upon Colonel Chou. The latter had assembled his riflemen and was keeping up a steady fire upon the advancing throngs. These answered with musket and cross-bow, bullets and quarrels singing through the night.

Smith drew the yellow noble aside.

"I'll take charge of these men," he said, "and we'll hold them in check. You attend to getting the nobles, and as many of your other men as you can find, into our compound. You know every one, and you can rally them quickly."

"Our cartridges are almost gone!" cried Chou, with a gesture of despair.

"I'll attend to it. Go!"

Smith turned to the armor-clad riflemen, and his voice cracked at them. His command of the language was sufficient to insure their obedience; and the six Tais hunters were a small host in themselves. The men scattered out among the trees and held their fire.

The fighting was now nearly over along the wall, as the remnants of loyal men were overcome, but loot and massacre were going forward in the inner city. Being now face to face with plunder and blood and fire, most of the nobles and officers had abruptly decided to throw in their lot with Colonel Chou—including many of those who had been of Liu Ku's party.

Smith was not a little astonished to perceive the number of men that Chou and his aids were rallying. The flaming barracks illumined the entire gardens by this time. Sweeping out from the inner city and the wall, masses of attackers came rushing in dense throngs, all converging upon the palace.

Smith sighed with regret.

"One machine gun would handle this mob," he reflected.

Then, waiting no longer, he lifted his automatic and began to fire.

At this signal, his scattered men brought their rifles into play. Bullets searched through the mob, halted the masses, shat-



tered and broke them. These were looters, disorganized soldiers, and the rabble of the town, who had banded together behind Liu Ku; but as they broke, through their ranks there came forward a long company of archers, who sent arrows raining against Smith's outflung riflemen.

The archers, in turn, were broken and shattered by the bullets; but now there were no more bullets. Having done his best, Smith ordered his men to withdraw. The fierce glow of the flames was dying down; the sharp edge of the attack was taken off; and Smith felt confident that Liu Ku, having failed to overwhelm all opposition, would wait until morning for further ventures.

In this he was justified.

### X

"It was cleverly planned, from what I can gather," said Smith.

He sat beside the couch of Ardzrouni at daylight, breakfasting. Major Wemyss and Florence were with them.

"Obviously, Liu Ku had arranged to assassinate the son of heaven, and you two white people as well—together with all the nobles who could be caught in the hall of audience. At the same moment the guards at the gates were being cut down by their treacherous companions, and the gates were opened to the rabble. Thanks to Colonel Chou, things did not go off quite as planned!"

Ardzrouni smiled faintly. He had slept well and, except for his pallor, looked as usual; nor was his wound, thanks to the bandaging of Florence, in bad shape.

"When will the show begin?" he asked.

"In about an hour, I imagine—as soon as Liu Ku can get his forces reorganized. So far we've had nothing but sniping; to-day will come the massacre," answered Smith coolly. "By the way, what about getting a treaty signed?"

He lighted his pipe, having received a smiling nod from Florence, and regarded Ardzrouni in his quiet, confident manner.

"You're the *de facto* ruler here," he went on. "I'm perfectly willing to make the right kind of a treaty with you, and to extend the protection of the French."

Ardzrouni burst into an irrepressible fit of laughter.

"By the eagle, you are magnificent!" he cried. "You should have been in my place, Smith! Well, I have been thinking

about that treaty; I have thought often about it. I believe I can draw up a document that will be satisfactory all around."

Smith rose.

"Very well! I'll send you in a scribe, if I can find one in the mob. Now I'll have to be taking a look-see around the place. I agreed to relieve Chou at daybreak—the poor chap is about done up. And," he added, with a glance at the others, "you need tell me nothing about how you came to occupy the throne here—just yet. Let us wait until we have signed the treaty—you understand?"

He left the room.

Wemyss followed, as far as the adjoining chamber. There he paused. The archers who had fetched his rifles had also brought everything else on which they could lay hands. With an exclamation of satisfaction, Wemyss opened a bundled mat and found his opium-smoking outfit intact. He fell to work over the little lamp, chuckling with delight.

"Liu Ku said that gold and jade were unlucky," he muttered. "Egad, I'm inclined to think just the opposite!"

He would have altered his opinion had he followed Smith.

The latter, taking over charge of the place from the exhausted Chou, perceived at once why the crafty eunuch had launched no attack. Within the compound were more than a hundred men, all archers and nobles, and the rooms of the palace itself were crowded with women and children of the nobles. For all of these there was no more food than would last a day.

As regarded actual defense, the outlook was still more hopeless. Aside from fire-arms, there was no lack of weapons; but on two sides the place was absolutely commanded from the roofs of the main palace, which were beyond arrow shot. Numbers of the enemy were already massing on these roofs.

Smith, finding two of the nobles who were skilled in calligraphy and spoke French, sent them in to Ardzrouni, and turned his attention to the enemy. So far as he could tell, Liu Ku was in absolute command of Ngongfu. Perfect order seemed to be maintained at the main palace and in the inner city.

Sending Ninh Bang with a request that Wemyss should bring out his rifles, Smith was mildly astonished when Wemyss appeared. The man seemed perfectly cool

and unruffled. Smith perceived the reason when he caught a breath of sweetish poppy, but made no comment.

"You and I," he said, taking one of the two rifles, "must clear those roofs yonder. We've no bullets to waste. Those chaps are going to open fire in a moment. Liu Ku probably intends to force an immediate surrender. Settle down, Wemyss, and pick 'em off!"

Having disposed his own force, Smith sought a corner nook of the wall, and opened fire. A moment later, Wemyss joined in.

From the palace roofs there came an answering storm of slugs and bullets, as rifles and muskets banged away. Only for a minute or two, however. Those two rifles, speaking with perfect precision, dropped man after man. From the compound went up yells of delight when the enemy hastily abandoned their position.

Smith rejoined Major Wemyss.

"Nice brisk work—what, Smith?"

"Very! How long do you think we can hold out?"

Wemyss lifted his sardonic brows.

"About an hour, I fancy, when once a real attack is made. The fat eunuch is nobody's fool, however. If his men let him alone, he'll starve us."

Smith nodded. Wemyss touched his arm, and pointed across the compound toward the buildings of the inner city. A body of spearmen were on the march; in their midst was a golden palanquin.

"There's Liu Ku now," said Wemyss. "He'll circle through the gardens safely and reach the palace from the other side. That is the royal palanquin, by the way. When he gets established in the palace, he'll send us an offer to treat, eh?"

Smith nodded again.

"Want to get out, Wemyss? If he'll let you and your daughter—"

"Not at all," returned the other calmly. "You can look after her, you know—French representative and all that. About me, no matter. I'd rather like to go west in a row of this sort, upon my word!"

Smith perceived that the man was in earnest, and repressed his smile.

"Very well! Call me if a flag of truce shows up. I'll be with Ardrouni."

He entered the building where Ardrouni lay. To his astonishment, he found the latter sitting in a chair and smoking a cigarette. Ardrouni was devoid of all his re-

gal panoply, and wore the faded khaki in which Smith had first seen him. He greeted the American with a smile.

"Excellent work, Smith! You cleared those roofs finely. Congratulations!"

Smith dropped into a chair and lighted his pipe. He glanced at Florence Wemyss, and then at the two nobles who were busily brushing characters on paper. Ardrouni took a sheet which lay under his hand and extended it to the American.

"There's the French draft. Miss Wemyss and I wrote it out; then our friends here set to work putting it into their own tongue."

Smith settled back in the chair, and began to read. His surprise was complete. Not only did Ardrouni abdicate, but he stipulated that the throne was to be occupied by Colonel Chou. Added to this were a number of provisions which caused Smith's eyes to open widely.

"Ardrouni, you're in earnest about this?" he said, looking up. "Think it over! The chances for winning may be better than you imagine. Besides, I have no intention of forcing you out."

That sad smile flitted across the face of the dark man.

"My friend, for me the dream is ended, and realities have begun. I have had my little fling; I am through."

"Win, lose, or draw?"

Ardrouni chuckled, and nodded assent.

"But this about the gold—"

"There's a building full of the stuff," said Ardrouni. "Besides, more can be had for the taking. It comes from a river in the royal hunting preserves, I've discovered—free alluvial gold. They kept it secret from the former resident. I'm revealing the secret on the conditions laid down in that treaty."

Smith picked up the paper and read it over again, frowning.

"H-m! Two-thirds of all mineral wealth exploited to be used for building of roads—installation of sanitary arrangements in Ngongfu—establishment of schools! Look here, Ardrouni—your friend Chou may not agree to all this limitation of loot."

"Have no fears about Chou," said the other coolly. "He is no looter. Besides, you will observe that there is a clause providing for a French territorial force to be held here to keep order—for which the treasury pays. In other words, the little

son of heaven here is reduced to the status of the other divine sons whom France has displaced; but the throne is guaranteed to him. And, my friend, any throne which is guaranteed in these days of rampant democracy is worth having! I, Ardrouni, can verify that fact!"

Smith grinned.

"Right! I agree to this. Suppose we call Chou and the chief nobles? If they sign it, I will accept the treaty."

Ardrouni nodded.

Ten minutes later Colonel Chou and a dozen of the most prominent nobles, who were in the compound, were crowded into the room. They listened without comment to the reading of the treaty; but when they heard the clause of Ardrouni's abdication and the provision for his successor, Chou was the first to make objection. His protest was sincere and without equivocation.

"We are loyal to you, son of heaven!" he concluded. "Call down your father the eagle, and smite these rebels! As for us, we serve you and you alone."

This was Smith's first inkling of the supposed supernatural powers of Ardrouni. In a whispered aside, Florence Wemyss explained the matter to him, whereat he grimaced and then broke into a laugh. Meanwhile Ardrouni spoke to the nobles.

"I shall leave here," he said, "as soon as this rebellion is quieted; until then, I remain. Protest is useless, my friends. The son of heaven does not change his mind. Colonel Chou, I appoint you my successor, and adopt you as my son."

And to this Chou eventually assented.

There was no objection to the other clauses of the treaty. Such of the nobles as had seals in their possession affixed them; the others brushed in their names and titles. Since the majority of the mandarin's council were here, the treaty was entirely legal.

Smith signed on behalf of the governor general, and it was done.

As Smith's brush left the paper, one of his Tais hunters entered the room hurriedly, with word that a flag of truce had come from Liu Ku. Ardrouni ordered that the messengers should be admitted. They proved to be a noble and an officer of the guards. Before they could deliver any message, however, Ardrouni signed to Smith.

"Tell them to go to the devil," he said abruptly, a flood of passion in his face.

"If I talk to the dogs, I shall want to take them by the throat!"

Smith addressed the two envoys in their own tongue, much to their surprise.

"Go back to your master," he said curtly. "Tell him that the son of heaven is under the protection of France, and that he refuses to talk with rebellious traitors. On only one condition will we treat—on condition that Liu Ku shall come and prostrate himself in submission before his master, for punishment."

With this the envoys were sent out again, and there was great applause. Smith, ripping open the lining of his coat, drew forth a folded silk, shook it out, and displayed the French tricolor. He handed it to Chou.

"Place this flag of France above the building," he said gravely.

So it was done.

The day dragged its weary length, with no sign of attack. The defenders were in eager spirits, looking at each moment for Ardrouni to perform his promised miracle and bring his eagle from the skies. The eunuch's forces, on the other hand, seemed to be in no little commotion.

Toward the middle of the afternoon Smith observed that troops were occupying the walls and the inner city, while others were marching into the outer city. Shortly after this, the sound of heavy firing reached the defenders. Ardrouni was first to grasp the cause.

"The soldiers who were called in from the watchtowers!" he exclaimed. "They are attacking Liu Ku's men!"

"That is your last hope?" asked Smith, with a curious smile.

Ardrouni sat back in his chair.

"That is our only hope," he said gravely. "If it fails, we are lost!"

In half an hour it was evident that the attack had failed. Liu Ku's troops came streaming back toward the palace, victorious. The beating of gongs, the mad firing of muskets, proclaimed their triumph. Chou and his nobles, fortunately, did not realize that Ardrouni had no hope left.

That evening the last of the food was shared.

During the hours of night, Smith was summoned by Colonel Chou, to find a most singular state of affairs. A number of the rebel nobles and officers had come to the compound to present their submission to Ardrouni; among them were several of the chief men who had clung to Liu Ku.



Suspicious and astonished, Smith inquired into their reasons for thus deserting the eunuch, for he dreaded a trap. He found that among the enemy had spread not only the prediction that the son of heaven would bring down his eagle to smite Liu Ku, but also a report that the envoys had seen Ardzrouni apparently unwounded. This latter fact was accounted a miracle.

Despite their success, the chiefs of the rebels had come to submit—hastened, perhaps, by the fact that a French resident was now at the side of Ardzrouni. What was much more to the point, these folk bore news that Liu Ku meant to attack the compound at dawn.

Smith kept all this to himself, smiling grimly as he sought his own couch again. The ironic paradox of it was both amusing and tragic. One earnest attack would mean the end—yet these yellow folk were deserting the winner in expectation of miracles!

At dawn Liu Ku attacked.

## XI

DESPITE the utmost vigilance, despite full preparations, the attack came in the waning darkness of dawn as a total surprise. It was more than an attack—it was a deluge!

Bundles of oil-soaked fagots suddenly burst into flame outside the compound walls. Before the guards could fire on the men who had set the flames, a burst of musketry came from the roofs of the main palace. Slugs and balls swept the compound, and a storm of death rained upon the crowded soldiery. Trees and roofs vomited forth arrows. From the gardens a mass of troops rushed swiftly forward to the attack.

Smith, who was on guard at the moment, strove desperately to rally his men; but bows were unstrung, arbalests unwound. Before any head could be made, before any order could be brought out of the confusion, the attackers were beating at the gates and scaling the low walls. And all the while the brilliantly lighted compound was showered with slugs and balls from the muskets on the palace roofs; while archers, stationed in the gardens close by, kept up a rain of shafts that struck down man after man.

In this moment of peril it was Wemyss who saved the situation.

He appeared suddenly, half naked, on the wall beside the gateway. He stood there, cool as ice, in the full glare of light, an automatic in each hand. Into the raging faces below he fired shot after shot, while about him sang shafts and quarrels, and long spears plucked at him with their curved hooks. Under his deliberate and deadly fire, the center of the attack broke, and by the time Smith dragged him to shelter the nobles had armed and were at the walls.

Now the attack surged up anew, with a fierce venom, in a hand-to-hand combat. But here the nobles proved their worth. Armed from head to foot, swinging long swords, they held the surging tide of foemen, beat back those who had gained the wall, and gave Chou time to get his archers at work.

These opened suddenly, sending into the mass of the attackers a deadly rain of shafts, while the hum of the bowstrings sounded through the din of shouts in a vibrant and angry undertone.

The blazing fires, which had almost brought success to that first wave of attack, now served the defenders well. The assailing forces were in the full light, and the angry shafts searched pitilessly through their ranks. Smith and Wemyss, with the last of their cartridges, began to work havoc with the musketeers on the palace roofs; and as suddenly as it had begun, the attack was broken.

There was no let-up, however. From the gardens about the compound, archers and arbalests shot their bolts of death, which rose high and came pattering down about the courtyard in a continual rain. Occasional bullets, too, came rattling into the place, and it was plain that Liu Ku meant to make a second and more determined effort.

As the gray dawn broke into day, Smith surveyed his fortress. He could not repress a groan of dismay. The place was a shambles; that commanding rain of slugs and bullets had left the courtyard red and reeking.

Suddenly the groups of nobles and soldiers were swept by a stir of excited interest; then a murmur of delight broke from them, and they prostrated themselves. Smith turned, and saw Ardzrouni approaching, in his faded khaki.

"Feeling fit?" he asked casually. "How's the wound?"



Ardzrouni shrugged.

"All right, thanks. Have you any spare pistol cartridges? I've run low."

"I've run out entirely." Smith smiled. "Sorry!"

"This evens us up—I think they'll fit."

Ardzrouni extended half a dozen cartridges—half of what he had. Smith nodded and accepted them.

At this instant a scream echoed from the buildings. The eyes of the two men met in startled recognition; then Ardzrouni turned and dashed away.

He entered the rooms occupied by Major Wemyss and Florence, to see the girl bending above the figure of her father. With an exclamation, Ardzrouni rushed forward and raised the major's head in his arms. The fallow features smiled faintly.

"Liu Ku was right—cursed thing bad luck—I say, you'll take—care of her—"

The head lolled suddenly. Ardzrouni glanced up to the girl's horrified face.

"How did it happen?"

"A bullet came in through the window and struck that pipe of jade and gold, and a piece of the jade went into his throat!"

With a burst of sobs she threw herself across the body of her father. Ardzrouni touched her hair with his hand, a caress in the gesture. Then, at a tumult of quick yells from outside, he rose.

"Wait here for me," he said, and hurriedly ran to rejoin Smith.

The sun was rising. The red fingers of the dawn had already turned to golden shafts that searched out the zenith. Above the palace, the flag of France hung like a glowing spot of color against the sky.

The final attack was begun.

Another outburst of confident yells greeted the appearance of Ardzrouni. For an instant he halted, sickened by the thought of the false faith that these men held in his miraculous powers. Bolts and arrows were devastating their ranks, looming across the new day like clouds, yet still they cheered him. Then he found Smith at his elbow.

"What happened?"

"Wemyss—a stray bullet. Here they come!"

They came, indeed, converging upon the compound from three sides, heralded by a last discharge of arrows. Chou's voice rang out, and the thinned ranks of his archers made response. The long shafts bit into the attackers, the last bullets from the

pistols of Smith and Ardzrouni dropped their men; but the attack was not halted. A wave of men broke upon the wall, surged up and over it, and fell inside.

Now came a clash of steel as the nobles met the shock. Smith drew back a little, and waited. He saw at a glance that everything was lost. The gates were smashed in, the wall was taken in several places. Ardzrouni, blood streaming down his face from a wound made by a glancing arrow, seized a long sword and threw himself into the thick of the combat. Beside him the lean, terrible figure of Colonel Chou uprose, smiting again and again.

Smith's eye was caught by a moving object outside the walls, and he saw the golden palanquin of Liu Ku coming from the palace. It halted at a safe distance from the compound, and the huge figure of the eunuch appeared, to watch the overwhelming of his enemies. A curse broke from Smith—his last cartridge was gone!

The whole line of wall was taken now, and in the compound everything had fallen into wild confusion—broken, scattered groups of men fighting madly. Ardzrouni and his followers were gradually driven back, encircled, hemmed in. Admiration filled the eyes of Smith as he watched the man who had been king.

"Well, the game's up!" he muttered. "If we could have only held out for a day or two, we might have been all right. As it is, I'd better join Ardzrouni and—"

His eyes lifted to the sky. They fastened upon something there, widened, and into his face leaped a great incredulity. Then, suddenly, his voice cracked across the din.

"Ardzrouni! Ardzrouni! Your eagle!"

The dark man heard. He drove his blade into a man who clung to him, shook himself clear, and looked upward with a laugh. The laugh froze upon his face. Into the air shot his arm and sword, the steel shaking at the sky, and his voice rang like a trumpet to his men around.

"The eagle comes! Ha, Ardzrouni!"

Abruptly everything fell silent. Men looked upward, forgot their weapons, and stared wildly at the sky. Remembrance of the prophesied miracle swept through all that fighting crowd—and they saw that the miracle had happened!

For, sweeping down from a great height, was the fighting aeroplane which Smith had ordered, and of whose arrival he had begun

to despair. The vibrant thrum of the engine reached the watching, staring men, and woke them from their trance. Ardrouni's nobles uttered one soul-piercing yell, and drove into their foes; and those foes broke before them, fleeing with screams of terror. The miraculous bird had come to shatter them in the very moment of victory!

Ardrouni leaped out among the foremost as the assailants flowed back over the wall, to be pursued and cut down mercilessly. He, too, had seen that golden palanquin—but Colonel Chou was ahead of him.

Liu Ku was striving frantically, furiously, to rally some of his men, when Chou reached him. The sword of the noble flashed in the sunlight, and rose crimsoned.

Ardrouni came back, panting, to where Smith stood at the gateway. The aeroplane was circling the gardens, seeking a landing place, and suddenly it darted down among the trees. Smith, disregarding everything around, quietly filled and lighted his pipe.

"Rather dramatic!" he said. "I'll have to go over and meet those chaps. There'll be a company of Territorials somewhere on the way, to consolidate things here, but I anticipated that the 'plane would make an impression. Lucky thing, eh?"

"More than lucky," said Ardrouni. "A miracle, I should call it!"

Smith laughed quietly.

"That's what your friends are calling it, and no mistake! Well, you'd better come along with me."

Ardrouni shook his head.

"No—you're in command here. I'm going to get out of this cursed place the minute poor Wemyss is buried. I'm going to see *her* now, to see if she'll go with me."

Smith's brows lifted in comprehension.

"So? Congratulations! I fancy she'll go, right enough; but why not stay here for a while? There'll be a priest with the troops, you know."

Ardrouni laughed, then turned and entered the building where Florence Wemyss awaited him. As he went, he smiled like one who has awakened from a dream into the light of day. And Florence, when he came to her, was smiling through her tears at the sight of his face; for, despite its marks of battle, that face was transfigured.

"It is ended!" said Ardrouni, taking her hand in his.

She looked at him and shook her head.

"No," she said, and again that smile broke through her grief. "No—it is only beginning."

"Thank God!" said Ardrouni, and bowed his lips to her hand.

THE END

### AN OTHELLO OF THE SEA

WHEN I was in my father's house, a maiden fair and tall,  
I had so many lovers that I couldn't count them all—  
Gay students that could sing and dance, and poets spouting verse,  
And merchants that had learned the art of wooing with a purse;

And soldiers clanking sword and spur with medals on their breasts,  
And sprigs of old nobility who lingered as our guests.  
Their grace and wit and ancient rank and gallantry and gold  
Amused me for a fleeting hour, but left my fancy cold;

Until one day a sailor came—his face was lean and brown  
And scarred with all the winds and waves from Hilo to Cape Town.  
He did not praise my hair and eyes, nor did he ever speak  
About my scarlet lips nor yet the roses in my cheek.

He talked instead of foreign ports, of silks and pearls and spice,  
And palms and coral reefs and bergs and fields of drifting ice;  
Of calms and storms and phantom ships in fog or twilight dim,  
And tropic stars and moonlit seas—and lo, I went with him!

Minna Irving

